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F. JOH. BERCHMANS S.J.

*St Mary's College*  
**THE LIFE**

# **ST. JOHN BERCHMANS**

**OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS**

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**TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY THE  
FATHERS OF THE ORATORY**

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**WITH AN APPENDIX**

**GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF THE MIRACLES AFTER DEATH, WHICH  
HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE HOLY SEE**

**FROM THE ITALIAN OF FATHER BOERO, S. J.**

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# ST. JOHN BERCHMANS.

CANONIZED JANUARY 15, 1888.

As with men so with Saints. To some we are drawn by a sweet attraction which we feel but cannot explain, while others we dare not approach. Only there is this difference that, while we shrink from some men, the fear is due to some real or imaginary defect we see in them, whereas with the Saints the feeling is one of awe that makes us admire them from afar on their high pinnacles of holiness, and leaves us timid to draw near in imitation of them, though we well know that what they have done we can also do. St. John Berchmans is one of the Saints whose youth, candor, mild disposition, and sympathetic nature instinctively attract us to him and win our confidence. His saintliness was the outcome of doing well and thoroughly the every-day duties of life, and he is hence represented in art as the model of common life, with rule-book, crucifix and beads.

The sacerdotal golden jubilee of Leo XIII will be ever gratefully remembered, because, on January 15, 1888, the illustrious Pontiff signalized the event by "decreeing and defining to be a Saint,

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and inscribing on the catalogue of Saints, John Berchmans, confessor, of the Society of Jesus." With him two other Saints of the same Society were decreed the public honors of the Church—Peter Claver, apostle of the negroes in South America, and Alphonsus Rodriguez, lay brother.

What is of special interest to the clients of St. John Berchmans in these United States as proving that he uses his influence with God in their behalf is, that one of the two test miracles chosen by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the canonical process, and mentioned in the decree of canonization, was an American miracle. It was a miraculous cure wrought twenty years since by the intercession of the Saint at the Sacred Heart Convent, Grand Coteau, Louisiana, and stood the searching scrutiny of the Roman tribunal. We are indebted for the details of the event to one of the community who wrote them down at the time.

On the 20th of September, 1866, Miss Mary Wilson arrived at the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau. Driven from her home in London, Canada, by her parents, who were Protestants, and who were incensed on account of her conversion, she sought a refuge as a postulant for admission among the friends of the Sacred

Heart. After a month of preparation and on the eve of her reception among the novices, she was suddenly seized with a most violent sickness. Day by day her condition grew worse and worse, until finally there was no hope of recovery by natural means. The condition of the patient, on the 14th of December, the last day of the novena which had been begun in honor of St. John Berchmans, was most pitiable. For forty days she had not taken an ounce of food; she took only a little tea or coffee, and, the last eight days, she was not able even to take this. She was expected to die at any moment. Her limbs were cold and contracted, her mouth and tongue were raw and covered with clots of black blood; with the greatest difficulty the Holy Viaticum was administered by giving her a small piece of an ordinary host. All the sisters then retired to hear Mass except the infirmarian who, seeing the patient calm, left her for a moment to attend the sick in the adjoining room.

In less than one hour after the reception of the Viaticum the patient was entirely cured, restored to health, as she said, by St. John Berchmans who appeared to her. Every symptom of the disease had passed away, and the next day she was going through the ordinary duties of community-life.

and she would have done so on the day of her cure, but the Mother-Superior thought it more prudent to make her stay abed. The two doctors who attended her attributed her cure to supernatural agency, for, they said, she was beyond the reach of natural remedies. The entire community and many visitors who had seen and known the patient attested the truth of the cure, so that its authenticity is beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The thought that our country will be forevermore in prominent association with the highest honor of St. John Berchmans brings him near and makes him one of us, and will give assurance in our appeals to his intercession. The knowledge of his heroic life will further increase our confidence, and we cannot more fully know him than by reading and studying Father Boero's complete and accurate account of the Saint's life, whose pages no one can peruse without becoming the stronger and better for it.

F. X. BRADY, S. J.



## PREFACE.

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THE lives of those who have been eminent by their virtues, and around whose names clings the odor of sanctity, even after they have finished their mortal career and disappeared from amongst men, are like beacon-lights upon the great ocean-track of life, and at the same time infuse encouragement, emulation, and confidence into the heart of the sometimes disconsolate pilgrim, who is still left to toil and struggle on his voyage from time to eternity. Some have dazzled by their brilliancy, others have astounded by their austerities, and others by the singular graces and privileges with which God's love has chosen to favor them. To others again, God has imparted no special prerogative of miracle, or ecstasy, or unapproachable sanctity; but has conducted them over the beaten road of the virtues proper to, and expected from their state of life, and has rewarded their fidelity with the same crown, that he deigns to place on the head of him,

whose grandeur of virtue and miraculous power astonish the world. Amongst those whose quiet, humble virtues have lifted them even to the honors of the altar—whose merit consisted in the exact and perfect observance of Religious Rule—the Blessed John Berchmans holds a prominent position. He is a model to old and young, but especially to youths who are pursuing their studies, and beyond all to the students of the Society of Jesus, who have to pass through the same routine of study and discipline in which John Berchmans sanctified himself, and merited and finally acquired the title of Blessed. For a long time this honor was withheld—there was nothing extraordinary in him—all was such as might have been accomplished by any man of equal fervor, diligence, and fidelity. There were no wonders of mystic and interior life, no raptures, no visions, no miracles—all was common, yet so perfect and absolute that nothing seemed wanting to its perfection. Virtues and miracles must go hand in hand to convince the Church of the sanctity and reward of those proposed for beatification and canonization. God himself intervened after the death of the saintly youth, to show to the world his approval of the virtuous life of Berchmans, and his desire that he should receive honor in the

Church, and his memory be held for ever in benediction.

The life of this blessed youth is indeed a mirror of every virtue that can adorn the religious character, or that of a young student in the world. After a virtuous childhood, in which his rare innocence, piety, obedience, self-denial, and humility made him already an object of admiration to those who knew him, and caused him to be pointed out by parents as a model to their children, he entered the Society of Jesus, at the age of seventeen years and six months, that he might thus early make a complete holocaust of himself to God in the sanctuary of religion. His whole religious career was confined to the short space of a little less than five years. Yet during that brief period, what admirable virtues did he practise! how exact in the discharge of every duty! how ardent in divine love! how delicate in fraternal charity! how angelic in his communications with God! how faithful to every inspiration! how actively and steadily progressive each day on the great highway of the divine service! To him with eminent truth may the words of the Wise man be applied: "*Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa.*" "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." He from the first was inflamed with an ardent

desire of walking in the footsteps of Blessed Aloysius, whose wonderful life had just been published. A close imitation of this admirable lover of Jesus, this fervent, zealous, and irreproachable Religious, formed the ground-work of his efforts to make himself a saint. Never was copy more faithful to the original. Aloysius seemed to live again. Those astonishing virtues, which had for so long a time diffused a spell of sanctity through the hallowed precincts of the Roman College, and whose like were never expected to be witnessed again, revived once more with all their beauty and sweetness in the person of John Berchmans. His modesty was angelic, his prayer absorbing, his exactitude marvelous, his diligence unabating, his mortification unflinching, his devotion to Mary most tender, his love of God most glowing, his sweetness of character, blandness of manner, sympathetic charity and humility of demeanor enchanting to the eyes of every beholder, and endearing him continually more and more to the hearts of his religious brethren.

God has been pleased to raise up in the Society of Jesus three young saints, in rapid succession, each of whom is a model to youth and a powerful stimulus to those advanced in life; Stanislaus Kostka, Aloysius Gonzaga, and John Berchmans. They each represent differ-

ent ways of divine guidance, all animated by the same spirit, embracing the same substantial virtues, tending to the same glorious end, and obtaining the same eternal reward. Those who are not favored with the singular privileges of an ecstatic Stanislaus, or who are terrified at the austerities of an innocent Aloysius, may find in the exactitude of Berchmans and in his diligent practice of the ordinary virtues of his state of life, not only an object of admiration, but a model for imitation, and an unanswerable argument of the practicability of perfect virtue. John Berchmans reached a high and heroic degree of perfection; yet how did he succeed in this sublime undertaking? By a continual and vigilant guard over himself; by carefully shunning the least deliberate fault; by a filial and most tender love of Mary; by a full subjection, both interiorly and exteriorly, to the will of his superiors, and to every requirement of obedience; in a word, by following in all things the discipline of common life, and observing with the utmost exactitude even the least rules of the Institute. What an incentive should not this prove to the acquirement of perfection! The example of Berchmans demonstrates, that it is in each one's power to become a saint. God grant that so bright an example be not lost on the religious

and secular world, especially on the youth of our day! On the contrary, may there be thousands in every age of the world, till time shall cease, who, by the perusal of his Life, will feel themselves drawn after him in the sweet odor of his virtues, and, walking faithfully in his footsteps, receive one day from the rewarding hand of God a diadem, equal in brilliancy to that which now glitters on the brow of the Beatified Berchmans.

In now re-publishing, for the first time in America, the "Life of Berchmans," translated from the French by the Fathers of the Oratory in England, we have deemed it advisable for the edification of the faithful to add to it, by way of Appendix, the narrative by Father Boero, S. J., of the miracles which were performed through the intercession of the holy youth, after his death. These miracles have all been approved, after the severe scrutiny to which they had to be subjected in the Process for Beatification.

LAUS DEO SIT.

THE LIFE  
OF  
BLESSED JOHN BERCHMANS, S. J.  
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BOOK I.  
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DIEST, a small town in the Low Countries, situated on the Demur, was the birth-place of John Berchmans. He was born on the 13th of March, in the year 1599, under circumstances which seemed to indicate his future sanctity. He was born upon a Saturday, the day consecrated by the Church to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he was to be so especially devoted in after-life. His baptism seems to have been deferred till the following day, that the servant of God might receive the grace of regeneration on the day dedicated to the memory of our Divine Lord's resurrection. He was named John, by a particular dispensation of Providence, who, designing to make of him another John the Baptist, a child of grace and benediction, had given him for mother a virtu-

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ous lady named Elizabeth, and for father, a man of singular piety, who afterwards (like Zachary) was honored with the dignity of the priesthood. Such were the parents of Berchmans, of eminent virtue, much better provided with heavenly riches than with the goods of this life, and much more solicitous to procure treasures of grace for their dear child, than the advantages of fortune.

All their care was to bring up holily him whom they acknowledged to have received from the Author of all holiness, and to whom they frequently dedicated him at the foot of the altar, earnestly praying that he might never lose the grace of baptism by any mortal sin. Their prayers were heard and granted, as the sequel of this history will show; the holy child preserved the white robe wherewith he was clothed at the sacred font unsullied even to his latest breath. No sooner did reason begin to disperse the clouds of his infant mind, than his parents (who were his first masters in the science of the saints) taught him to revere the Author of his being; engraving in his soul the knowledge and love of Him, together with an extreme horror of everything which could be in the least degree displeasing to Him. He received these salutary impressions with pleasure, and faithfully corresponded to them. Equally



docile to the instructions of those who taught him the first elements of grammar, he learnt as easily the principles of it at school, as he did the principles of piety at home. When he was only seven years of age he would rise at day-break, that he might have more time to divide between study and devotion; and he used to say that he found devotion an excellent preparation for study. Every day he served several masses, and the facility with which he afterwards applied to study, proved that his scholastic duties suffered no loss from the length of time which he had previously spent in the church. As he grew in age he also grew in grace and wisdom, upon the model of the Divine Infant Jesus, to whom he had consecrated his heart, and whose example he studied that he might become a faithful copy of it: hence he was an example to his equals, the admiration of his masters, and the delight of his parents. Child as he was, he never joined in the amusements of childhood, nothing of levity appeared in his conduct, and he never spoke but on edifying subjects. The Holy Ghost, who dwelt in his heart, (as in His own temple,) regulated all its movements, and shed such an unction on his words, that they touched the hardest and consoled the most afflicted hearts. His good mother experienced this during a

long and painful illness: on one occasion her sufferings were so acute, that her patience was almost exhausted; Providence permitting that her soul should be overwhelmed with a mortal sadness, at the same time that her body suffered excruciating pains; in this distress a thought struck her to call for her little angel, for such was he then considered. No sooner was he by her bedside, than she became immediately relieved, the clouds of melancholy dispersed, and she regained her usual serenity.

After she had experienced this surprising effect, caused by the presence of her holy child, she could not bear to have him out of her sight, wishing to have him always at home: this was also his own wish, because he found himself secure there from the inevitable dangers to which his age was exposed when absent from home: he never quitted this happy asylum, unless the duties of piety or study called him elsewhere. Without exaggeration, we may say of him what is related of St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen; that, like them, he knew but two streets, one which led to the church, and the other to the school. His disrelish of the world was so great, that he would gladly have renounced all intercourse with it, if his age (which was only twelve years) had permitted it. He had already renounced it in his heart; and hav-

ing obtained leave to throw off its livery, he very joyfully clothed himself in a clerical habit, which he called the livery of Jesus Christ, and which he had chosen for his inheritance. This happiness was much increased when he was afterwards placed under the care of Peter Emmeric, religious of the Premonstratensian Order, and curate of the church of our Lady at Diest. His house was a kind of seminary, where children were formed, by the study of Christian virtues and of literature, to become, later in life, faithful ministers of the altar. During the three years which our holy youth spent here, he was a constant subject of astonishment to all, from the maturity of his judgment, so much beyond his age, from his angelical conduct, and from his extraordinary love of prayer, which he so well knew how to reconcile and combine with study. These two duties completely occupied his time, never sparing any to the amusements of his age, which, however innocent they might be, he disliked; and when his companions were engaged in them, he would slip away quietly, to seek the company of God; resembling in this, and in many other things, Tobias, of whom the holy scripture records, that when children of his age went to adore the golden calves, he left the profane troop of little idolaters, to retire alone into the temple, to pay homage to the Lord. Berch-

mans did much the same; and leaving his companions at their games, he would withdraw to some retired part of the house, and there pour forth his heart in the presence of his Creator. No one took offence at his conduct; the esteem they all felt for him commanded their respect; and if by chance any of his companions reproached him for not joining in their sports the gentleness with which he always answered, obliged them to own that nothing of ill-humor or melancholy occasioned his love of solitude, and that "the Holy Ghost led him to the desert, there to speak to his heart." He made his first communion about this time, preparing himself for it with extraordinary fervor and by a general confession, which, at his own request, he made to his master. If the good religious had been before charmed with the piety and assiduity of his pupil, he was more so now by the innocence of his penitent; scarcely finding, in a very exact confession, a single sin which was matter of absolution. "I wept more than once," said his confessor, "over the angel at my feet, himself bathed in tears, accusing himself of the lightest faults with the most lively contrition." Being thus purified by the waters of penance, he approached with a holy fear and tender love to the Author of all purity, at a mass celebrated by his master. The man of God assures us that

he perceived something more than human in the holy child at the moment he approached the altar, which he did with so much respect, and with a countenance so modest and inflamed, that the angels must have been delighted at the spectacle.

Our most amiable Lord, whose delight has always been to converse with the children of men, took a singular pleasure in the soul of Berchmans, to whom He communicated Himself without reserve, establishing His reign there forever. This new possession of the Word Incarnate, produced effects which every one perceived and admired. Regular as his comportment had always been, it became still more so after this time of grace; he seemed to live in a total forgetfulness of creatures, when so happily possessed of his Creator. The world became contemptible in his eyes, his greatest desire was to quit it entirely; his only consolation was in solitude and silence, and all his happiness, the frequentation of the sacraments. He confessed every week, and communicated every fortnight at the least. He did not defer his preparation till the day arrived, he always began it on the eve; and amongst other practices of devotion, he never failed at night to throw himself at the feet of his master, begging pardon for his faults, hoping to obtain by this humiliation the graces,

which are always bestowed upon the humble. In this good priest he considered only the person of Jesus Christ. He did the same with regard to all those who, like him, were invested with the dignity of the priesthood; he conducted himself towards them, with a sort of religious veneration, his faith and piety acknowledging and respecting in them the sovereign Pastor of souls. He never approached them with his hat on, and when at meals with them he always remained bareheaded, even in the depth of winter unless an express order obliged him to do otherwise. His excellent master, Peter Emmeric, felt almost equally distressed, whether he saw him bare-headed in the very severe season, or in offering violence to his humility by obliging him to wear his cap; however, when he insisted upon the latter, in order to compensate for the loss of this little consolation, he would appoint him the duty of reading at table, a duty which he executed with great satisfaction, and which he would have reserved for himself always, if it had depended on his own choice. It had been his custom from childhood, to have a book before him when he took his meals; and was so attentive to this spiritual refection, that he scarcely heeded what he ate. He most frequently selected as the subject of his pious lecture, the sacred passion of our Divine Lord, to which he

was most tenderly devoted. It had been the constant subject of his meditations from a very early age. The Holy Ghost, even then, had been his Master, teaching him how to speak to God almost before he knew how to speak to men. The same Holy Spirit, which had inspired so ardent a love for Jesus crucified, infused into his heart a love no less tender towards the Mother of Jesus. He endeavored to show every mark of respect and devotion to both, on all occasions. As soon as he could compose poetry, he wrote most devout and affectionate verses in their honor. One of his school companions kept as a relic, the translation into Latin verse of the *Salve Regina*, written by him. He had fixed certain days to go and offer his devotions to the Queen of Angels, in a chapel dedicated to her at Montaigu, about a league distant from Diest. He went alone, that he might be free from interruption or distraction; and during his little silent pilgrimage, he spent the time, partly in saying his beads, and partly in meditating on the excellences and grandeur of the august Queen, to whom he was going to offer his homage. That he might not appear in her presence with empty hands, he used to offer with his heart some little mortifications; for it was his custom, on the eves of his pilgrimages, to deprive himself of his breakfast, and also of any little luxuries which

were given him, that he might regale the poor in her honor, and have some little sacrifice to offer her. Trifling as these sacrifices may appear, they were very agreeably to this Mother of all goodness, and she recompensed his love and confidence, by frequent marks of her special protection. It was doubtless this protection which guarded his purity, and rendered it inaccessible to all the contagious attacks of the world. He seemed not even to know the name of the contrary vice. He avoided every appearance of danger; and the smallest irregularity, either of conduct or language, in any of his companions, was enough to make him shun the company of such a one forever after. But this seldom or ever happened; the presence of Berchmans sufficing to silence indiscretion. It was this acknowledged virtue which gained him the respect of his equals, and a certain ascendancy over their minds which always kept them within due bounds. There was nothing imperious in his manner; yet all felt his superiority, because he had made himself master of their hearts; and whilst his piety and wisdom commanded their respect, his mildness and affability gained their affection. One only companion (whose evil disposition was despised by all who loved virtue) showed a great aversion to our holy youth, he lost no opportunity of ill-treating him, though



he, on his part, never gave him the slightest provocation. Almighty God no doubt permitting this as a counterpoise to the general esteem in which he was held, in order thereby to exercise his humility and patience; both were unalterable under the rudest trials, so that his dear companions were filled with admiration at his conduct, as they were with indignation at that of his tormentor. It was necessary to force him from their arms when he quitted the house of Peter Emmeric, in obedience to his father, who recalled him home, where a severe trial was appointed him by Providence. It was caused by almost unexpected proposal on the part of his father, who thus addressed him: "It is impossible, my dear child, for me to continue the expense of your studies; you must be resigned to give them up, and choose some other state of life more suitable to the resources of your family. I am well aware that this change will be a subject of great grief to you, as it likewise is to me; there is nothing which I would not gladly do for your advantage, but I must do this in the manner best proportioned to my means." Berchmans was overwhelmed by this intelligence, and for sometime was unable to make any answer; at length, bathed in tears, he threw himself at his father's feet, beseeching him to continue his pecuniary assistance some time

longer, adding, that in a few years he should be devoted to God in the service of the Church. "It is to that," said he, "that I am called; you know it, my dear father, and you cannot resist the Divine will, nor can I follow this Divine will, unless I am enabled to continue my studies. You have too much submission to God, and too much affection for me, to prevent me from following a vocation on which all my happiness depends, and perhaps the happiness of our family likewise; all this will be at once checked if my education is to be discontinued, since this is the only means to effect the desired object. As to the expense, I beg you will have no anxiety about it. I will economize so well, that the family shall be subject to no inconvenience on my account; only allow me a little bread and water, with permission to continue my studies, and I shall be content." His father was much affected, and convinced at the same time of his vocation, he embraced his dear son, and consented to all his wishes; in order to accomplish them, he was placed most fortunately under the care of a canon of Mechlin Cathedral, named John Freimont. This was a most providential arrangement for young Berchmans; the excellent ecclesiastic, whose merits equalled his distinguished rank, treated him with the tenderness of a father, and supplied

those means which his own father was unable to afford, furnishing all that was requisite to complete his education: everything seemed to concur favorably for this purpose; the liberality of the illustrious protector, and the ardor of the pious youth, together with the opening of a new college at Mechlin by the fathers of the Society of Jesus, seemed evidently to prove the Divine will with regard to Berchmans' vocation. No sooner was this college opened, than the youth of the town and surrounding country flocked in crowds to attend its classes, drawn thither by the reputation of the fathers who directed it: it was universally believed that Almighty God granted some special blessing to their endeavors, in imprinting on the minds of those committed to their charge principles of the most solid piety, at the same time that they taught them human science. Berchmans felt a strong desire to partake of these advantages: some obstacles arose to prevent it, chiefly in consequence of some certain persons, who, not knowing, or not understanding the character of the society, misrepresented the conduct of its members; but these obstacles were soon removed; the discernment of the Canon Freimont quickly appreciated their merits, notwithstanding the calumnies raised against them, and his pious scholar was most urgent in his

entreaties for permission to attend their classes, in which he at length succeeded. Upon his first examination, the prefect judged him capable of rhetoric. He had scarcely studied it a month, when his indefatigable application, joined to his naturally powerful talents, gained him all the prizes and honors; he composed pieces in prose and verse, which might have passed for the productions of his masters. The father who taught him considered him even then capable of teaching others; and all the college looked upon him as a prodigy of talent for his age, and as a model of piety and regularity of conduct. So many good qualities (which his angelical modesty seemed to embellish) struck every one there with admiration, and soon procured his admission into the congregation of our Blessed Lady; the father who governed it having as much pleasure in granting this favor, as the virtuous scholar had eagerness in asking it.

Berchmans' joy was at its height when he was admitted into this pious association; he was delighted that devotion to his good Mother should be so religiously observed; and that at an age when corruption so easily insinuates itself, purity of morals should be so strictly maintained, through the protection and assistance of the most pure Virgin Mother. He engaged as many as he could to join this holy

devotion, as well for their own advantage, as to increase the number of courtiers to the Queen of Angels. He fasted in her honor on Saturdays and the vigils of her feasts; he daily recited certain prayers with this same intention; and at the beginning of each month he consulted the father-superior of the congregation, to learn from him what faults he should correct, and what penances he should practise, in honor of our Blessed Lady and his monthly patron. He usually spent the greater part of the night on his knees in prayer upon the bare ground, which afterwards served him for a bed, on which he took a little rest till day-break. Whenever he had the happiness to communicate, it was his pious custom to retire and pass two or three hours in profound and silent homage before his heavenly Guest, and return Him thanks for the honor of His visit. Nevertheless, Berchmans did not seek to establish his devotion on Mount Thabor; he would follow our Divine Savior to Mount Calvary, preferring the happiness of sharing in His sufferings, rather than in His honors. Every Friday he made the seven stations, to honor the mysteries of the Passion, but anxious that the God of all love, whom alone he wished to please, should be the only witness of his devotion, he did not undertake it until towards the evening, and then performed it with

bare feet, using for this purpose shoes which merely covered the upper part of the foot, and which he had arranged himself, that he might more effectually conceal his penance from the eyes of men. But God, whose pleasure it is to exalt the humble, manifested the merits of His servant in proportion to the pains he took to hide them. A singular intervention of Providence, apparently in favor of Berchmans, occurred about this time, which served not a little to augment the esteem in which he had hitherto been held. The circumstance is thus related: Freimont, the pious ecclesiastic of whom we have already spoken, returning from a journey of devotion to our Blessed Lady's Chapel at Montaigu, accompanied by Berchmans, from whom he could scarcely endure to be separated, unfortunately missed the right path: this accident was followed by another, which distressed him very much: a violent tempest suddenly arose; the atmosphere seemed to be on fire; thunder rolled most awfully, and lightning flashed most vividly; and what made his situation still more perilous and difficult, was being in the midst of a thick forest, without the slightest idea how to find his way out of it. In this extremity, he recommended himself and his companion to the guardian angel of Berchmans, whom he considered to be

little less than an angel. No sooner had he done this, than raising his eyes he perceived a female figure of gigantic stature on the top of a rock. This monstrous woman rolled down the precipice, and falling at the feet of our holy youth, in horrible contortions, threatened him both by words and gestures; yet without touching him, or doing him any injury. As soon as she had disappeared, the storm ceased, the air became clear, the sky resumed its usual serenity, and the two pious pilgrims found themselves at the entrance of a small village, where, upon inquiry, they learned that the woman they had seen in the forest belonged to that neighborhood, where she was looked upon as a sorceress, and shunned accordingly. From all this Freimont concluded, that the spirit of darkness (the declared enemy of all devotion to our Blessed Lady) had probably raised this tempest; and that the angel guardian of Berchmans had appeased it, in consideration of the innocent youth; to whom he attributed ever after the preservation of his life on that dangerous occasion. As to Berchmans himself, he was filled with the most lively gratitude, and made a new offering to God of the life He had so wonderfully preserved, making a resolution to consecrate it entirely to the divine service in a religious house. His soul was too precious

in the sight of God to be left exposed to the dangerous contagion of a profane world. The asylum to which Divine Providence and his own inclination led him, was the Society of Jesus. Although the order had only been known to him about a year, he felt particularly drawn to it. But to be more certain of the will of God in his regard, he had recourse to fervent prayer. He redoubled his penitential austerities, confessed more frequently, and requested permission of his director to communicate twice a week, hoping to be thoroughly enlightened by Him who is the source of all light. And that he might omit nothing to merit this great favor, he distributed all the savings of his pocket-money, amounting to twenty-five florins, partly in relieving the poor, (whom he wished to be his advocates with Heaven,) and partly in procuring masses in different chapels dedicated to our Blessed Lady, hoping, through her intercession, to be assured of the good pleasure of her Son. He frequently consulted the director of his soul upon the subject, being convinced that he would be the organ through which Almighty God would intimate His will to him. He sought this knowledge with too much good faith to be mistaken; indeed, it was imprinted on his mind too clearly to allow any doubt as to his vocation to the Society of Jesus.



He often said afterwards, that the epistles of St. Jerome had given him a great disgust of the world, with a strong predilection for the religious state; but that the Life of Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga, (then just published,) had drawn his affection completely to the society; that his choice became fixed by witnessing the apostolic zeal of the Jesuits in Flanders, the abundant harvest which they were gathering there, their incessant efforts against the religious innovators of France and Germany, and by the news which so often reached them from England, that the fathers there had the honor of suffering for Christ, being confined in horrid dungeons, or put to a most cruel death, to which they exposed themselves most willingly, in the hope of regaining to the centre of unity innumerable souls which schism and heresy had severed from it. Being convinced that Almighty God required of him to be a Jesuit, he bound himself by vow to use all his endeavors to become one; and that there might be no delay between the promise and its accomplishment, he applied at once to Father Scribani, then provincial of the Flemish Jesuits, for permission to enter the noviciate. The good father, who had already heard of him in the most advantageous manner, received his request favorably, and gave him hopes of being immediately admitted,

if he could obtain his parents' consent. To effect this, he wrote them a most moving and persuasive letter, in which he tenderly conjured them to oppose no obstacle to the execution of his design, nor even to delay it; he reminded them that he owed it in great measure to their pious instructions, of which he should be little able to profit if he remained in the world, which they had taught him to despise; that, in fine, he had vowed to consecrate himself to God in religion; that this was a promise made before Heaven, consequently it was not lawful, either for him to fail in it, or for them to oppose it. He entreated them to reflect, that he belonged to God, before he had belonged to them; that this great Master called him, and that he only waited their consent to answer to the call.

It will not be difficult to imagine the impression which this declaration made on the hearts of his affectionate parents: they loved this dear child too tenderly, not to feel a lively sorrow at the idea of losing him; but they were excellent Christians, filled with the spirit of religion, and possessed of piety far surpassing the ordinary number of secular persons. With such dispositions, they were careful not to oppose their son's design of giving himself wholly to God; they did not forget the offering they had made of him to God in his tender in-

fancy; they were far from wishing to disavow or revoke the donation; but they would have felt much more satisfied had Berchmans been content to serve God in the ecclesiastical state in the country and diocese which gave him birth, instead of choosing an order which so positively renounces all ecclesiastical benefices. They engaged the fathers of the Franciscan order to repeat and enforce their reasons upon the mind of their son: they did so after the manner of true servants of God, not intending to shake, but only to prove his vocation; and having recognized it as the work of God, they animated him to pursue it courageously and faithfully. One only religious amongst the number, (whose zeal was less enlightened, or his judgment less profound,) acted differently. He undertook to change his resolution; but Berchmans having upon several occasions listened to his reasonings and refuted them thought it was his duty at last to put an end to them, grieving that a religious man should have undertaken to plead so bad a cause; therefore, without wounding in the slightest degree the honor due to his order or himself, he begged him to retire and spare himself the trouble of any further visits or communication on the subject. He sought and obtained his spiritual strength in prayer alone; it supported him in

all these dangerous occurrences, and at length triumphed over the resistance of his parents. Having obtained their consent, the provincial of the Jesuits immediately granted him the favor which his perseverance so well deserved. He entered the society on the 24th of September, 1616, aged seventeen years and six months; he had for a companion in his happiness, a young Fleming, who had formerly been his fellow-student. These two were the first fruits which the college at Mechlin gave to the Society of Jesus. Berchmans thought himself in the company of angels as soon as he had joined the novices; the sight of them transported him with joy; he embraced them, and received their cordial welcome with a sweet and holy friendship. The frivolous ceremonies of the age had no part in their mutual expressions of regard; pure and simple love of Jesus Christ could alone unite the hearts of so many young men of different nations and of different characters, which were there dwelling together in perfect union of heart and sentiment. A prodigy of this nature, (happily so common in the houses of the noviciate,) was immediately perceived by our young novice, who was delighted with it, as well as with all his new brothers, whose example he believed would teach him how to live for God alone. Filled

with the idea of his happiness, the tears streamed down his cheeks, sighs burst from his overflowing heart, and the terms in which he spoke of the grace of his vocation, showed how highly he appreciated it. When he had been but a day or two in the noviciate, and before he had been appointed to any of its arduous duties, he saw one of the brothers digging in the garden. "Come," said he, cheerfully to his companion, "let us go and help that good brother; we cannot better begin to serve Jesus Christ than by practising humility and charity, of which He Himself gave us so many examples;" and taking up a spade, he began to work with great diligence and fervor.

This virtue, (which is nothing else than the love of God in its most active and most purified form, and which may consequently be called the quality of the perfect, rather than the virtue of beginners,) belonged pre-eminently to our holy novice. The sole motive of pleasing God ruled all his actions, and from his first entrance into religion, he always aimed at the highest degree of sanctity. He had often declared to his director, when speaking on the subject of his vocation, that he hoped by the grace of Jesus Christ to become a great saint. "I cannot conceive," said he, with an inflamed countenance, "how I could have any other

idea in the holy society to which God calls me; and it seems to me impossible to be a member of it without attaining to a very eminent perfection, so powerful and so numerous are the means furnished by the rules in order to attain it." Faithful to his promise, as well as to the graces with which our Lord had blest him, he studied from the beginning to acquire and practise the high degree of perfection to which he aspired. There was no need of sparing him, as there usually is with regard to certain weak souls, who would soon become weary of our Lord's sweet yoke, unless some condescension were shown them, to accustom them by degrees to the things of God, which condescension, joined to the example of others, enables them at length to bear the weight of their duties without feeling oppressed by them. We may truly say of Berchmans, that he never exhibited this weakness. Acting upon the important advice of St. Bernard, he began by beginning perfectly; being fully convinced, that it was vain to expect he could become a good religious, if he neglected to be a perfect novice. It was not that he performed any extraordinary actions, but he had fixed deeply in his mind this principle, (so necessary in a spiritual life,) that perfection does not consist in great things, but in doing well those duties which obedience

prescribes. It was his grand maxim to perform the most common actions in an uncommon manner. The elder novices were surprised to see that he had advanced as far at the end of the first month, as they had at the end of two years; they could never sufficiently admire the easy, fervent, and animated air, with which he went through the duties of the noviciate, adapted, as he seemed from the very beginning, to the order and regularity prescribed there; they all agreed in saying, that God had sent them this dear brother, to be their accomplished model of a perfect novice; with this idea, they all respected him as an angel, and one of them good humoredly remarked, that at the time our Blessed Lady began to perform miracles at Montaigu, she performed one no less surprising at Diest, namely, sending them an angel in the person of Berchmans. It is true that he had the purity, the candor, and the modesty of an angel; something angelical seemed to shine upon his countenance, which struck with delight those who beheld him. Moreover, he was not one of those whose austere piety leads them to suppose, that they cannot be virtuous but in proportion as they are severe and gloomy; such conduct injures, rather than honors virtue. In our holy novice, who was cheerful, polite, and amiable to every one, devotion appeared

so full of charms, that to esteem and love it, nothing more was necessary than to cast a look on him. While he was thus causing virtue to be loved for its charms, he loved and embraced its rigors; always choosing those duties which were most humiliating and laborious: he set no other bounds to his desires of mortification, but those prescribed by obedience: without offending against this virtue, which he believed ought to be the rule of all other virtues, he made it his duty to declare to his superior the ardent wish of his heart, that he might be permitted to bear in his body the mortification of Jesus Christ; and he represented this in terms so persuasive, that the master of novices thought he could not refuse his permission to this weakly constituted youth, of practising austerities which he scarcely allowed to the most robust. At the noviciate of Mechlin may be seen, even at the present time, the instruments of his austerities, which are carefully preserved there as so many precious relics; particularly part of a rough penetrating hair-shirt which he usually wore, and some linen stained with his blood, caused by the severity with which he used the discipline. He never seemed more joyful, than when he was allowed to practise these pious cruelties upon himself: he was equally pleased to wear the oldest and worst cassock in



the house, which he procured by his earnest entreaties; he always kissed it with great respect whenever he put it on. But convinced that these exterior humiliations were pleasing to God, only inasmuch as they emanated from humility of heart, he took care to carry a humble heart under his humble habit; and happy as he felt, when clothed with it, he did not consider that it made him at all more virtuous. Ever watchful against secret pride, which often slides in under an equivocal covering, he always endeavored to be animated by a true spirit of interior abnegation; so that when he humbled himself before men, he humbled himself still more profoundly before himself and before God. He accused himself of his faults, that he might receive correction and confusion for them; he sought them with the lamp always in his hand; and fearing lest self-love should conceal them from his sight, he earnestly entreated his companions to observe and admonish him of them, begging his novice-master to desire this act of charity at their hands. This disposition proceeded from the high idea which he had of the sanctity and infinite purity of God; and also of that which He exacts from those souls who have the honor of approaching Him frequently, a disposition quite uncommon at the present day, when immortification is so

general, that the most gentle reprimands frequently cause severe wounds. Berchmans so passionately desired reprehension, that he requested his superior to appoint four of his fellow-novices, to observe and admonish him of his defects. One day it happened that one of them noticed a slight omission which escaped him whilst he was engaged in some office of charity which took up his attention; never was joy more evident, or gratitude more sincere, than that of our holy novice; he looked upon him who had admonished him of the failing as his benefactor and friend; he offered to God a number of prayers for him, promising to repeat the number every time his companion should exercise the same act of charity. The greatness of the recompense animated his young admonitor, who redoubled his vigilance, but he declared afterwards that however careful he might be in examining Berchmans' conduct with the strictest exactitude, he never could detect a single fault; this must appear surprising, but what follows can be considered as little less than miraculous. The rector of the noviciate relates the circumstances: "Having been frequently solicited by the young novice to tell him publicly of his faults, I could not refuse him this satisfaction. Accordingly I desired all the novices, amounting to nearly a hundred,

to mark down in writing whatever they perceived defective in Berchmans. I then assembled them together in the hall of the noviciate, where having received and opened their notes, not one of them contained a single complaint; no one having observed the slightest fault in him, which is the more surprising if we consider the number of these young persons, all beginners in a spiritual life, and of very delicate consciences, which, joined to their natural vivacity, would make them extremely liable to observe the smallest faults in their equal, especially if he be the object of peculiar esteem or preference. The result of this meeting caused much greater confusion to our humble novice, than the declaration of the greatest faults could have done. We were all obliged to pity him in the affliction which overwhelmed him, and to console him as if he had fallen into some terrible disgrace; in fine, all who were present felt equally delighted and edified by his innocence and humility." The oldest and most experienced amongst the fathers were struck at his extraordinary virtue, and having examined him attentively, more particularly during the inexperience and vivacity of youth, unanimously agreed that all the perfection, (suitable to the state and age of Berchmans,) which we read of in the Lives of the

Saints, might be found in an eminent degree in this incomparable novice. This was more particularly the opinion of his novice-master, who knew him even to the bottom of his soul; and who saw, as with the naked eye, all his holy dispositions. This prudent director was careful to conceal from Berchmans the good opinion which he had of him; being well persuaded that to let him know his elevated state would be exposing him to the danger of declining from it; and remembering that this angel of earth was not stronger than were the angels of heaven, that, like them, he was liable to fall; and that if they could not support the sight of their own perfection, without being dazzled by its splendor, it would be exposing his still more fragile nature to the dangers of vain complacency, were he made sensible of the singular graces with which our Lord favored him. The aim then of this good father was to conceal them from him, by seconding, to the utmost of his power, the fervent dispositions of his disciple, who strove to acquire the spirit of self-abnegation, by the continual consideration of his own lowliness and baseness. It is true he was distinguished amongst his companions by being named their admonitor-general, when he had been only a few months in the noviciate; as such, it belonged to him to see that exterior

regularity was observed, to give the sign for beginning their customary duties, to inquire daily of their master what was to be done, and then give notice to the novices accordingly. It is true, I say, that this distinction was conferred upon him in consideration of his merits, but it was done with such precautions as were much more likely to humble than to elevate him. We may judge of his sentiments upon this subject by his writings, which were found after his death, in which he declares that he was chosen to this office only because he was the most unworthy, and to give him subject of confusion, at the same time that it was a subject of mortification to his companions; that this shadow of elevation might make his defects more evident to all, and call for the charity and forbearance of all. His dear brothers found nothing reprehensible in his manner of discharging this office, nor indeed in any other respect; on the contrary, his charity, his modesty, and his kindness, delighted them, and led them unanimously to declare, that whatever marks of favor or consideration might be shown him, he certainly deserved still more. They felt happy to have him at their head, saying, that though in age he was only their equal, his eminent virtue made him greatly superior to them.

This extraordinary sanctity, acquired in so short a time, proceeded from his intimate union with Him who in the sacred writings is called the God of virtues. This God of all goodness, who manifests himself so willingly to pure souls, communicated Himself to Berchmans, and enlightened him in all his doubts; for he made it his rule to carry them to the Blessed Sacrament, when he went to pay his respects there; and he never failed finding the lights and the help he sought. His heart was ever intimately united to this amiable Saviour. He visited him as frequently, and remained as long a time, as the regulations of the noviciate allowed; and to manifest the desire he felt of being always in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, he would, when compelled to leave the church, beg of St. Stanislaus, or Aloysius, to take his place there, and present his heart to our divine Lord during the time that he should be absent.

When engaged in devotion, either in the church or in his oratory, he appeared penetrated with the presence of God; his eyes were either raised towards heaven, or closed to all on earth; his hands joined before his breast, always kneeling, and his whole person calm and immovable. His countenance, which was always serene, became inflamed during the

course of his prayer. His companions would endeavor to approach as near as they possibly could to him, in hopes of sharing in his fervor, or at least of being animated by his example. On his part, he thought his prayers worth little, unless they were united to those of his dear brothers. So great was the esteem he felt for them, and so high his opinion of their virtue, that he hoped to obtain all he asked when his prayers were supported by theirs. Three things he most ardently prayed for, angelical purity, a constant fidelity to his vocation, and grace to become, one day, a worthy member of the society. He felt a holy impatience to bind himself to it by the vows of religion. He did so, a thousand times, from the bottom of his heart, whilst he was unable to do so in reality, because the term of his noviciate was not expired. To console him under the afflicting necessity of the delay, he was permitted to make the simple vows of devotion, a favor which is only allowed to the most fervent. He had in his childhood made a vow of virginity, in honor of the Queen of Virgins, to whom he was most tenderly devoted as well as to her chaste spouse, St. Joseph. He admired in them both their sublime greatness and their profound humility. Their example excited in him a great love for the latter, which he looked upon as the foundation of all other

virtues. It was this that kept him perpetually annihilated, as it were, in the lowly opinion he had of himself; and being persuaded that he had been received out of pure charity into the house of God, he felt bound to look upon himself as the last and least of all. Fixed in this principle, he had no fear of vain-glory, as he himself owned to one of his companions, who questioned him upon the subject, adding cheerfully, that he felt no dread of that beast.

A heart so humble, could not be otherwise than obedient. Obedience was singularly dear to him; all that he heard upon this virtue, so essential to a Jesuit, pleased him; but nothing delighted him more than the admirable letter which St. Ignatius had formerly written to the fathers of Portugal; the reading it had attached him most tenderly to this great saint; he admired in it his exalted wisdom, illuminated by the pure light of heaven; and he respected every word as an oracle. Like a worthy son of so wise a father, he used to say that we ought to obey in the smallest things, that doing so served as a preparation for the obedience to be practised in the greatest, and that we cannot better show our respect to superiors than by executing their orders most faithfully, even though they be of the least importance. He was a stranger to those convenient inter-



pretations that self-love sometimes suggests, in order to evade obeying strictly to the letter, he always confined himself to the terms prescribed, preferring that men should accuse him of want of prudence, rather than give our divine Lord the least reason to reproach him with a want of submission. On one occasion, being sent to the door by his superior to receive a stranger, who had asked for him, a second visitor arrived during the time that he was speaking to the first; he begged the new-comer to allow him to go first and ask permission, before he could begin to converse with him. He acted in the same manner on numberless other occasions; and he did it with so much sweetness and modesty, that no one could ever be offended at it. His manner of observing silence was so pleasing, that it might not inaptly be called the seasoning of his exactitude. Being questioned upon his method of observing it, he frankly answered, "I respectfully salute every person that I meet; if any service is required of me, I perform it as promptly as possible; if I am asked a question, I answer in as few words as I can, avoiding on my part, to say any words not absolutely necessary." It was likewise his custom to salute the guardian angels of the persons whom he met, stopping for a moment, and stepping a little aside, that he might respect-

fully leave the path free; this was a mark of deference and respect, in which he never failed, and he did it with so much sweetness and modesty, that every one was pleased to meet him.

This air of modest gaiety accompanied him everywhere. He never seemed dull or severe but when the interests of purity seemed to require it, which very seldom happened; for having little or no commerce with the world, those with whom he habitually associated, were far removed from anything which could in the least degree shock the strictest delicacy. Moreover, his very looks inspired a love for this virtue; he neglected nothing on his part to acquire it in perfection, or to preserve its lustre unsullied. His delicacy on this point made him watchful over all his movements, both during the day and night; he never changed his position when in bed, however much he might suffer either from the cold in winter or the heat in summer. In order to keep the spirit of darkness at a distance, he besought the angels and his holy patrons to watch over him whilst he slept; he armed himself with the sign of the cross, and placed his crucifix opposite to him, that Jesus, the Author of all purity, might be his sovereign protector. As his last thought before sleep was holy, so likewise was his first upon waking; he began and finished the day by profound adora-

tion of the Blessed Trinity, and by an act of homage to the Queen of Angels, whom he looked up to as the grand protectress of his chastity. He applied himself more particularly to the practice of those virtues which are most closely connected with purity, contending with his enemies incessantly. "I will wage war against them," said he, "and will never rest until I have destroyed them." Idleness, pride, and gluttony, were the vices he most vehemently denounced, because he believed them to be the most dangerous to purity. It was his opinion that we must combat them the first moment we enter into religion; beginning our spiritual warfare by laboring to destroy them; that the most efficacious means of success will be to arm ourselves with the virtues most contrary to them; that fervor is the most powerful remedy against sloth, as humiliations and abstinence are against pride and gluttony. What he counselled with wisdom, he practised with fidelity; he more passionately desired contempts and abasement, than the most ambitious could desire honors and esteem. His temperance was carried to the highest degree, so that in his examinations of conscience, he never could discover on this subject anything to accuse himself of in confession. So little was he concerned about his meals, that he never so much as thought

of them until the sound of the bell summoned him to the refectory, where answering to the usual prayers and blessing, his look and manner plainly showed that he was quite indifferent to these material refreshments, and that he performed, in an angelical manner, an action altogether animal, being obliged to it by obedience and by the necessity of nature. Whilst at table his mind was in a state of profound recollection, offering his meal to our Divine Lord; in fact, he partook of nothing that was placed before him until he had offered it to Him, representing to himself, (as it was found in his writings,) that he fed the Infant Jesus in the persons of the poor, to whom he always gave in spirit what he retrenched from his own allowance. This idea gave him great pleasure, and induced him to deprive himself of the best things that he might present them to the Blessed Infant. His youth and delicacy of constitution, obliged him for some time to take something in the morning; this practice was always accompanied by an indemnifying mortification, and by lessening the quantity of food by degrees, he became able to fast as long as the rest of his companions. This was a great satisfaction to him, because it allowed him to devote more time in the morning to Almighty God. In recompence of this fervor, he became in a short time so superior to the

wants of nature, as to attend only to those of the soul. Pious reading, spiritual exhortations, and sermons, were to him as spiritual banquets. He went to them with eager alacrity, and his attention and recollection plainly told how much he desired to profit by them. He was for some time much troubled by the temptation of sleep and drowsiness, but his courage and self-denial soon overcame it; sometimes he bit his lips till they bled, at other times he pinched his arms till they were quite discolored, and by these means he contrived to banish sleep. When his companions complained of feeling drowsy during spiritual duties, he taught them this method of rousing themselves, which had succeeded so well with him. It was thus that these fervent novices communicated their little trials to each other, and thus did our blessed Lord teach them how to remedy them, even during the time appointed by obedience for recreation. Berchmans had a peculiar talent for rendering the hours of recreation useful, without being too serious and grave; indeed, his companions declared that one hour spent with Berchmans, was as profitable to them as the hour they spent in meditation; whilst he, on his part, said that the conversation after dinner helped to keep him recollected until evening, and that the evening recreation prepared him for the morning's meditation.

His great delight was to hear and speak about the Indian missions, particularly those of China and Japan; and the idea, that he might one day labor there for the glory of Jesus Christ (and perhaps lose his life for the cause) transported him with joy, and made him weep with devotion. The vast empire of China, (whose provinces even may be considered large kingdoms,) seemed to him most worthy of a Jesuit's ambition: his inclination led him particularly to that flourishing, yet singular country; he frequently spoke of it to his companions, who, like himself, eagerly hoped to labor there in the vineyard of the Lord. Our holy novice was not of the number of those who nourish the futile hopes of some day performing great things, and yet neglect to perfect themselves by the practice of smaller virtues, and by well performing their present ordinary duties. He was convinced, that the noviciate of the society was nothing less than a noviciate of the apostleship; and that the candidates labored in silence and retirement during two years to sanctify themselves, only that they might be qualified to labor at the sanctification of others during the rest of their lives; and that the most essential duty of a novice, is (by the grace and help of Jesus Christ) to begin betimes to lay the foundation of a stock of vir-

was capable of sustaining the weight of the apostleship. With these exalted views, he never lost a moment of his time, and omitted nothing that could help to fit him for so sublime an office as the conversion of souls. He joined to the other duties of the noviciate the study of the French language, in obedience to the orders of his master, who had observed his facility in its pronunciation; and he was most assiduous in his application, because he thought it highly necessary for the good of souls, especially in Flanders, where the people have so much communication with France. He mastered the difficulties in an incredibly short time; and was able to make little French discourses in the refectory, as easily as if it had been his native language. One, which he made in honor of his patron, Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga, surprised all who heard it; and they were equally delighted at his devotion towards the saint, and the facility with which he explained and commented on his virtues.

He did not confine his zeal to the noviciate only; he was truly happy when exercising it in the surrounding villages and hamlets, whither the novices of the society are sent from time to time to make little missions. Berchmans considered these missions his seasons both for sowing and reaping, and abundant harvests every-

where attended his labors. He sought out the poor in their cabins, and after consoling them under their respective trials, he would conduct them to the church, and there teach them how to secure happiness in the next life by patience under the afflictions of this. These good simple people delighted to hear him speak of the kingdom of God, and listened to him with earnestness and eagerness. Fathers and mothers led their little ones to him, who, gained by the sweetness with which he taught them the Christian doctrine, received his instructions with docility, and following him in crowds when he left the church, would accompany him to his own door, where distributing some trifling presents amongst them, he dismissed them; though his most precious gift was the treasure of celestial doctrine, which he studied to imprint in their young and tender minds. From his care and solicitude for these poor unknown strangers, we may easily infer how great must have been his affection for his brothers in religion. He carried them all in his heart, and shared in all their afflictions, receiving the counter-blow of all their trials. Observing that one of them was grievously troubled, and tempted to quit the noviciate, he tried to console him, (having first gained his confidence,) representing to him all the motives best calcu-



lated to fix and strengthen his poor wavering mind. But perceiving that the agitation of his companion was too great to allow of his seeing his own danger, and that he was determined to abandon all without delay, Berchmans, with tears in his eyes, and in most moving terms, besought him to postpone his departure at least for a few days. Having obtained a promise to this effect, he spent his time in most earnest prayer, tenderly beseeching our Blessed Lady to succor this poor fugitive, and to recall him to his former sentiments. His prayer was too fervent and too sincere not to be granted. The novice recovered his usual tranquillity and peace of mind, together with his former attachment and devotion to his vocation.

Berchmans exercised his charity in the same high degree towards all his companions; and so perfectly conciliated their friendship and esteem, that he was the delight as well as the example of all. He was ever most welcome amongst them; and they often declared, that they never quitted his company without profit; that his very look was sufficient to fortify the weak, and to inspire fervor in the tepid; and that, like a talisman, he engaged all (even the most indifferent) to love their Creator, with whose love he was so powerfully inflamed; he became still more so as the time of his religious

profession drew near. He had now no ties of relationship; after seven years of heroic suffering, death had released his mother, and his father was spiritually dead to him, having consecrated himself to God in the ecclesiastical state. Berchmans being thus disengaged from all that could attach him to this world, and replenished with most holy joy, thought only of preparing himself for the worthy consummation of his sacrifice. He wrote to his father in these terms: "I am too near the happy day, when I shall consecrate myself to God, not to inform you of it; I consider it the most glorious day of my life, and I watch its approach with most heart-felt consolation. This information, which respect and gratitude require that I should give you, will no doubt produce the like sentiments in you; for in fine, my dear father, what an honor is it for you, that the Creator of all things should thus distinguish one of your children from amongst a million of others, in order to honor him with His alliance, and condescend to receive him into the society of His Son! I entreat you to join your gratitude with mine, for this so great benefit; and in order to obtain the graces necessary for me, in such happy circumstances, I beg three masses of the Holy Ghost, to be celebrated in the Chapel of our Lady at Montaigu. If you add this

favor to the many others I have received from you, I hope that this spirit of love will inflame my heart, and quite consume its victim." It was on the 25th of September, 1618, he offered in the purest flames of charity his sacrifice to God. He pronounced his vows with the ardor of a seraph, and immediately afterwards received his amiable Lord, to whom he had just given himself. This reciprocal donation filled him with transports of joy, and banished every thought but that of his happiness. He considered that he might, with a holy and loving liberty, use those words of the sacred Spouse, "My Beloved is all mine; and I am all His." The whole day passed in these transports; it was truly a solemn festival to him, and the whole house was edified by his devotion; no one was more so than the master of novices; but he was not surprised, for he expected no less, knowing, as he did, the dispositions with which Berchmans had prepared for this great and important act; he had found them so perfect, that he did not judge it necessary for his novice to make the spiritual exercises of eight days, which is the usual practice of the society previous to the profession; his two years of probation had been one uninterrupted retreat.

Thus finished the noviciate of John Berchmans, a moment which came too soon, if we

only consider the advantage and edification of his fellow-novices. The idea of being separated from him overwhelmed them with great grief, and there was not one that did not weep when embracing him in the final farewell. He, on his part, gave every proof of sincere friendship; they mutually promised an eternal alliance in Jesus Christ, and having nothing at their disposal but prayers and good wishes, they promised to offer them for each other; after which they separated, the novices to complete their term of probation, and Berchmans to go and commence his studies in the college appointed by his superiors. However, before we enter with him on his new career, I cannot omit an unquestionable witness of the perfection he had reached whilst only a novice, that of no less a person than Father William Bauters, the master of novices. Father Cepari, first writer of the Life of Berchmans, having finished it up to the time of Berchmans' religious profession, sent it to Father Bauters, that he, who had been so intimately acquainted with the virtues and interior dispositions of the novice, might judge of the accuracy with which it was committed to paper. We subjoin the novice-master's answer, as it will show the esteem he had for his disciple, as well as his opinion of the first part of his Life, which the

Italian Jesuit had sent from Rome. "I have received, Reverend Father, what you have compiled of the Life of our very dear brother John Berchmans, with all the respect and esteem due to its author; and I have read it with all the pleasure which so edifying a work would naturally inspire. It would be impossible to draw a portrait more natural, or more strikingly resembling the original, than the one you have traced. In considering the features, which your pen has so faithfully depicted, he seems to revive amongst us; we recognize him, as he was, in the angelical character so peculiarly his own, and which you have justly ascribed to him. It is, I assure you, a real satisfaction to all the Jesuits in Flanders, to recover in your writings the angel we had thought to have lost. To myself in particular, (who had the honor of being his father in Jesus Christ,) it is indescribably consoling to read his Life, and to recall to mind the examples of virtues which edified all in this house. I admired him more than any one, being obliged by the duty of my office to penetrate the inmost recesses of his soul. There was no difficulty in doing this; his innocent candor concealed nothing; and it was with continued and renewed astonishment that I observed the sweet benedictions and favors, with which our Lord prevented him on the one

side, and on the other the faithful correspondence of the docile servant. My earnest petitions to Heaven, even then, were that I might have grace, if not to equal him, at least to follow his footsteps. I cannot conceal from you, Reverend Father, the confusion I experienced to see that young novice, so superior to myself in sanctity; a confusion which is renewed every time I look upon and kiss a little picture which he gave me when he was leaving Flanders, and which he begged I would accept, as the pledge of his eternal gratitude for all the goodness which he believed I had shown him. What confounds me most of all, is the inscription which he put upon it, wherein he styles himself my unworthy son. Alas! this worthy son ought rather to have called me his unworthy father! being so far removed (after many years of religious life) from the perfection he had attained to, even in the commencement. I cannot recall him to mind without blushing; and I fear my confusion will be yet greater at the day of judgment, when, confronted with my novice, I shall be found so different from him, and so much inferior to him in solid virtues. Whilst I reproach myself, Rev. Father, for having profited so little by his brilliant example, I reproach my memory no less, for having forgotten so many striking instances of

his fervor. I sent you those I could collect, in compliance with the order I had received from Rev. Father-general, as soon as I knew that you were preparing to write the Life of Berchmans. But truth obliges me to declare that what I had the honor of forwarding to you, is nothing in comparison of what I saw. What I advance may perhaps surprise those persons who measure the merits of saints by their exterior conduct, but those who believe with the royal prophet, that the beauty of the daughter of Sion, (that is to say, the perfection of just souls,) is quite interior, will not be at all surprised at the manner in which I express myself when speaking of the high sanctity of this faithful servant. The little that appeared in his exterior, bore no proportion to his intrinsic merit, and of which I only was made acquainted because I was his superior ; and as such, holding in his regard the place of God, he considered himself obliged, according to our rule, to disclose the inmost recesses of his soul to me. I there remarked the traces of Divine Providence, which had from his earliest age conducted him, as it were, by the hand in the paths of grace, and which continuing to direct him through the term of his noviciate, had led him in an incredibly short space of time to most eminent perfection. After having well studied his character and conduct, I dare affirm

without fear of encroaching upon truth, that from the day he entered into this house, until the day he quitted it to set off for Italy, he never neglected or left void any one of the graces which Almighty God vouchsafed to grant him; that he constantly and uniformly maintained the fervor which animated him in the beginning; eagerly thirsting to attain the degree of perfection to which God in His eternal predestination called him. This is not my opinion only; all who were so happy as to live with him believe the same. All unanimously agree that the virtues requisite to form the character of a perfect man, were realized in him; in fact, there were seen in him innocence the most pure, with humility the most profound; a modesty which seemed to deprive him of his eye-sight, with a charity that seemed to restore it whenever his neighbor required comfort or assistance; a kindness and consideration towards everybody, joined to the most exact regularity, entirely free from all human respects; a wisdom and intelligence equal to the maturity of old age, with the simplicity of a child towards his superiors, to whom he always yielded the most implicit obedience. This, Reverend Father, is the most simple and the most correct idea that I can give you of John Berchmans, whose history you are writing. He is already venerated in Flanders as a saint, and considered



one of the patrons of the country. No sooner was his death announced, than the most skilful artists made copies of his portrait; they found it difficult, notwithstanding their zeal and activity, to satisfy the eagerness of the public to secure these pictures; an eagerness which was by no means confined to the common order of people, the most distinguished and the most illustrious amongst all religious orders, desired to have his portrait in their houses. The one which you are going to present to the public will be far more precious, inasmuch as it will represent the mind and the most secret virtues of his soul; whereas, the art of the most excellent painters and engravers can only trace the features of his face. You will (much more effectually than they) augment in our hearts the devotion towards him, which is already cherished there; you will transmit it to those who shall succeed us; and in placing before our eyes this wonderful example of sanctity, you will teach us that it requires less of years than of courage to become a saint. Pardon, dear father, the length of this letter; it is excessive if measured by the ordinary rules of correspondence; but, on the other hand, I must say it is too short as regards the subject of it, as well as the merits of the holy novice, whose virtues could not possibly be expressed in fewer words."

## BOOK II.

ALTHOUGH it was the will of Almighty God to give John Berchmans especially to Flanders, He was nevertheless pleased to edify France by his presence, though but for a moment, and then, previously to taking him to Himself, to lend him for a few years to the capital of the Christian world, whither we are now to accompany him.

His provincial, Father Scribani, being at Antwerp, (making the visitation of the province,) summoned Berchmans thither, telling him that the will of God required he should repair to Rome for the completion of his studies, desiring him to proceed in the first instance to Diest, (to take leave of his father) and from thence continue his journey to Rome. Whilst on the road to his native place, he received news of his father's death, in consequence of which he changed his plan, and instead of visiting Diest, he preferred offering his prayers for the repose of his good father's soul, as being more conformable to his ideas of filial piety. Having no longer any father on earth, he threw himself

with renewed confidence into the arms of his Heavenly Father. As the provincial's order had not specified that his visit to Diest was on account of his brothers and sisters, (although he might have so interpreted it,) he had no desire to go to them; having made it an inviolable rule from his first entrance into the noviciate, to obey his superiors punctually to the very letter. He considered, therefore, that he should comply with the duty of fraternal friendship, by writing two letters in behalf of his brothers and sisters, one to the person who was appointed their guardian, and the other to his former friend and master, Freimont, begging him to act the part of a father towards his family, as he had formerly so kindly done towards himself.

This was all the farewell he made his native country. He started for Rome on the 24th of October, 1618, accompanied by Bartholomew Pennemann, a young Jesuit of his own age, and whose pious dispositions nearly resembled his own; it was on this consideration that he was chosen, together with Berchmans, by his superiors for the Roman College. Pennemann's time there was but short. A pulmonary complaint attacked him soon after his arrival; he was sent to Naples for change of air, where he died a holy Jesuit, as he had been a holy

novice. It seemed, therefore, that Providence had taken him to Italy, only that he might be the companion of Berchmans on the journey, which they undertook at a very unfavorable season of the year; however, the tediousness of it was much diminished by their cheerful and edifying conversation. "What an advantage for us, my dear brother," said Berchmans, "to live in a city consecrated by the blood of martyrs; to be able to honor there the princes of the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, to kiss their chains and the dust upon their tomb! What a consolation for us to go through our studies in the first college of the society, where we shall learn the science of the saints by following the examples of those with whom we are going to live!" Such were the pious sentiments of this holy young man, nor were those of his faithful companion dissimilar to his own; they mutually animated each other in their resolution of striving to live like saints, in a place where they would meet with so many means to become such; neither of them probably foreseeing that Italy, which was to be the term of their journey, would also be the spot destined by our Divine Lord to receive their last breath! On their road thither they passed through several provinces of France, everywhere leaving a sweet recollection of their virtues. One vene-

nable father in Champagne, distinguished for his merits and for the important functions he discharged in the society, always rejoiced that he had been able to see these two angels on their passage to Italy; and towards the close of life, when bending, as it were, beneath the weight of years and virtues, it always filled his heart with holy delight when he recalled to mind these amiable youths, whose piety, he said, had so charmed him. They made the same favorable impression at Paris and Lyons; and though the lateness of the season, which obliged them to hasten their journey, scarcely allowed them to spend more than one night at the different houses of the society which lay on their road, they everywhere left such strong impressions of their modesty and piety, as were never obliterated: several letters expressive of this reached Rome before they did.

Our travellers had the happiness of reaching Loretto on Christmas Eve. To Berchmans, who, was so singularly devoted to the Infant Saviour and his Virgin Mother, it was peculiarly gratifying to celebrate the solemn festival of the Nativity in the place where the Incarnate Word vouchsafed, for love of us, to clothe Himself with our mortality. The devotion to which he entirely abandoned himself in this consecrated place, made him forget the ordinary wants of

nature; for instead of taking rest during the night, (which the fatigue of travelling made so necessary for him,) he spent the greater part of it in long exercises of devotion, assisting at matins, which are sung with great solemnity in that holy chapel: his modest and recollected comportment was a subject of admiration to the numerous pilgrims then assembled at Loretto. His devotion increased during the mass, and at the moment of communion seemed completely to transport him; nevertheless, his ardor was of that sweet and tranquil nature, that it fortified rather than weakened him; and produced the same effect that sleep and nourishment usually do, for he had scarcely allowed himself time for either, during the two days he spent at Loretto. Before he left, a father of the Society, who had remarked his great devotion to Blessed Aloysius, gave him some relics of that glorious saint, which he looked upon as his most precious treasures. He and his companion hastened their journey to Rome, where they arrived just in time to celebrate the Festival of the Sacred Name of Jesus, which is kept with great devotion in the Jesuits' church. They were most cordially welcomed by all the fathers in Rome, but particularly by him who was father to them all, the Father-General, Mutius Vitelleschi, an Italian. This illustrious man was delighted to receive

these two angels, for he was himself called, "The Angel of the Council," on account of his profound wisdom and singular modesty. Having allowed them time to recover from the fatigues of their journey, he conducted them to the college, where they were as cordially welcomed as they had been at the professed house: they were lodged in the apartment appropriated to the young Jesuits, immediately upon the completion of their noviciate. This separation, which the society considers to be of the greatest importance to the junior members, is intended to maintain and even perfect in their minds, the true spirit of their state; it precludes not only all commerce with strangers and seculars, but all intercourse with the inmates of the house also. This ancient custom was confirmed by the sixth congregation of the order, as being very proper to maintain the spirit of fervor and recollection in beginners; accordingly a decree to this effect was passed, ordering this holy custom to be observed, but more particularly in the seminaries, for the advantage of the numerous youth therein assembled; recommending the provincials (who have an express rule upon this point) to take care that it was observed, and, moreover requiring the father-general to draw up an instruction, which might serve as an explicit rule to the whole society. Berchmans entered with great

alacrity and fervor into this sort of second noviciate, which only differed from the first, inasmuch as he practised a more exalted virtue, and joined the study of human literature to the science of the saints. His extraordinary merit soon became generally appreciated, and every one in the house was struck at his wonderful sanctity, which was no less amiable than admirable. There was nothing of austerity in his recollection, retirement, and silence; he was cordial and cheerful in his intercourse with his companions at the hours appointed for conversation; and if spoken to at a time of silence, he would answer, as briefly as possible, it is true, but always with kindness and civility, being convinced that exactitude and devotion without charity, are chimerical, and that no one can truly love either God or his rule, unless he love his neighbor for God, proposing to himself this grand motive of charity as the first and chiefest of all his rules. Nothing was dearer to his heart than this important virtue; to perfect himself in it, and to be continually on the watch against everything which could in the least degree impair its lustre, he made it the subject of his particular examen, upon the plan which St. Ignatius had traced out for practising this exercise; not, indeed, that this saint originated the practice, but it is only justice to him to say



that he gave such precise and clear rules upon the subject, that whoever faithfully observes them will most certainly succeed in the reformation of his interior. This examen differs from the general, inasmuch as the latter extends to all faults, whereas the former confines itself to the defects arising from one particular vice. St. Ignatius requires that we begin with that one vice which sensibly predominates in us; in the morning we must resolve to combat it, foreseeing and guarding against the occasions which may possibly surprise us, keeping every day an exact account of the faults committed; so that at the end of the week, by comparing one day with another, we may be able to judge how far we have repelled the enemy we undertook to defeat. This was a stratagem the wise legislator had learnt from the system of secular warfare, to which in early life he had been trained; he found it extremely profitable in a spiritual life, when properly directed, frequently remarking that to be able to vanquish our enemies it was only necessary to separate them.

He recommended the same practice in the acquirement of virtues, saying, that to become master of all, they must be taken up singly, and it was his decided opinion, confirmed by constant experience, that we should assuredly

conquer, if we undertook them thus one by one, applying all the energy of our mind and soul to this grand object. Berchmans never failed to comply with this pious duty, which he considered one of the most efficacious means to acquire purity of heart. Another motive which induced him to practise it exactly was the example of St. Ignatius himself, who never omitted it, even when overwhelmed by the pressure of most important affairs. The first fathers of the society were equally zealous in its practice; always finding time to acquit themselves of this great duty, though they often wanted time to satisfy the pressing necessities of nature in the midst of their multifarious occupations. Berchmans' diligence on this point equalled the idea he had of its importance. He observed its slightest rules with the greatest attention; and if through forgetfulness he failed in the least degree, besides the penance which he imposed upon himself, he always repaired to his superior, and asked an extra penance, saying that this practice answered the purpose of a spur, continually urging him forward on the path of duty. It was by this holy industry that Berchmans so happily succeeded in the study and acquisition of religious virtues, which in fact constitute perfection. The perfection of this holy servant of God did not merely consist in

being free from ordinary faults; his innocence was but the first prop in the foundation upon which our Lord raised so sublime an edifice. According to the testimony of Father V. Cepari, (who was his superior in the Roman College during his life, and the writer of his Memoirs afterwards,) the most eminent virtues were to be found in Berchmans, those even which St. Thomas considers as belonging only to the most perfect and purified souls, such as are seldom found but in heaven, or, at the most, in a small number of persons, who are so entirely disengaged from the imperfections of this earth, that they may without much impropriety be considered as already belonging to heaven. In this class may be numbered our holy religious; to form this opinion it was only necessary to see him; his every look inspired esteem and a certain feeling of respect and veneration, which we usually, and in a manner involuntarily, feel, when in the presence of exalted sanctity.

The fervor and piety with which he performed his most common actions, convinced those who saw him, that the intention which animated and actuated him, must have been most sublime and perfect. "Whenever I had the happiness," continues Father Cepari, "to fathom the depths of this highly-favored soul, I was as much astonished as I was delighted; and

this happened to me very frequently. I had no occasion to remind him of his duty on this point; he came every fortnight with the confidence and docility of a son, to manifest the secrets of his heart. I remember particularly on one occasion, when describing to me with his usual candor the singular favors which God conferred upon him, and the exact fidelity with which he endeavored to correspond to these graces, I was seized with admiration, (which however I was careful to conceal,) and exclaimed within myself, 'O my God! this is truly a precious soul in whom You are well pleased, since You adorn him thus early in life with the most tender proofs of Your mercy. This grace of the new man which You have conferred upon him, appears to me to resemble that first state of innocence in which You created man! So slight are the traces of original corruption in this young heart, that it seems to be re-established in the state of primitive purity.' Such," continues Father Cepari, "were my thoughts; not that I believed them strictly to the letter, but that no others would better express what I saw and admired in his pure and well-regulated interior; besides, I was well aware that however great and wonderful the innocence of this pious youth might be, it was of course not quite exempt from slight

failings; since, in the greatest saints, (as well as in the most brilliant stars,) some specks may be discovered." To the above testimony we may add what has been related by those fathers who were his confessors from the time of his arrival in Rome until his death, to whom he gave full permission to make what use they pleased of the secrets of his conscience. Father John Baptist Ceccotti, a very spiritual person, (appointed for this reason by the superiors to be the director of the young Jesuits when they left the noviciate,) thus writes: "Amongst the great number of persons whose interior dispositions I have known, I have never met with one whose purity of heart surpassed that of our dear Brother Berchmans; the sins of which he accused himself were only such as the most holy persons fall into, which are more the effects of human weakness, than of any unruly will of the heart. With him they were never either mortal in their nature, or even deliberately venial; for, besides being light of themselves, they were still more so by the manner in which they escaped him; being the effect either of surprise or of human frailty, and never with consent of his free will." "What gave me a secret veneration for him," adds another of his confessors, "was the acknowledgment he often made, (with expressions of humble candor and intense gratitude towards God,) that

he did not remember having committed during the whole course of his life one deliberate venial sin." He carried his horror of the least fault to its highest degree in everything connected with his vows, never finding matter of confession on this point. Rather than commit the slightest fault against any of them, especially that of chastity, he would have preferred a thousand deaths. This virtue was incomparably more precious to him than his life: to preserve it he willingly sacrificed all natural attachments and pleasure. Instructed by the wise man that this virtue is the gift of Heaven, he incessantly directed his prayers thither, that he might draw it to himself; but fearful lest his confidence in God might be presumptuous if he did not join to it his own endeavors, he watched over himself, and continually mortified his innocent body; thus practising to the letter the advice which our Divine Saviour gave to His apostles, "Watch and pray." He watched, that nothing might be wanting on his side; and prayed that he might obtain from God what was beyond the reach of mere human power. By uniting these two means so necessary to the preservation of innocence, he happily carried his without blemish from the baptismal font to the tomb; nay, he did more, for he perfected it by the practice of religious virtues.

As he had made an inviolable resolution faithfully to observe the laws of God, so did he, with the same fidelity, resolve to observe the rules of his religious state. He would have exposed his life to every danger rather than transgress the least rule, or fail in submission to any order of his superiors, for he considered that both emanated from the same authority; and he did not think that a religious could flatter himself with the hope of being obedient unless he showed equal deference for every duty bearing upon it the stamp of obedience. Everything in "the house of our Lord" was of importance to Berchmans, who looked upon the least observances as so many honorable bands, which bound him to the service of the Great Master, under whom slavery was far sweeter than the most unrestricted liberty elsewhere. Under these impressions, the minute details of regularity which are so troublesome to the imperfect were delightful to him; and he found greater satisfaction in his state of absolute dependance, than others did in following nothing but their own wills. Hence, he never quitted the apartment assigned to the young Jesuits without first asking permission; never spoke to any but the companions of his study without the same permission; always answered in Latin, as the rule prescribed; when at the

country house, (where usually more liberty is allowed and taken,) he made no use of the privilege; was careful to observe the same strict rules of modesty; acquitted himself of his spiritual exercises as regularly and exactly as when in the college, performing them on those recreation days with as much recollection as if he were in retreat; and, in fine, he observed a thousand minute details of duty with a fidelity which never wavered. Such was the life of Berchmans; composed of actions small of themselves, but which, when united together, were able to form a great saint, springing from so pure a motive as the pleasure and will of God alone. I might produce numberless examples of all kinds; a few however will suffice to enable us to judge of the rest. Returning one day from walking with two of his companions, they were invited by one of the older fathers to join their company, because their being in the country allowed that construction to be put upon the rule, which in college forbids the intercourse between the elder fathers and the young religious: but Berchmans, who always confined himself to the strict letter of the law, thanked the good father for the honor, but civilly declined to accept it, and left him as much edified by his exactitude, as he was pleased with his amiable modesty. He gave



proofs both of one and the other in an occurrence of a somewhat similar nature. Being pressed by a Flemish Father to become associated with himself and a young Jesuit who had just left the noviciate, and who was of the same country, Berchmans begged to be excused, and deprived himself of the pleasure he would naturally have felt in being united in friendship with those of his own nation: a bond of union, usually so strong and so persuasive, made no impression upon the mind of Berchmans; agreeably to the spirit of the society, he loved all his brethren with an equal love; or if he ever showed a more marked affection towards any one of them, it was only because they seemed more virtuous, and more strongly animated by the love of Jesus Christ; and that he hoped thereby to strengthen and confirm the same sentiments in his own heart; but he would not even agree to an intimacy so well purposed, without the consent and approbation of his superiors. During his last visit to the Jesuits' country-house, recreating himself with his companions in a filbert-walk, where the fruit had been already gathered, one of them perceiving a nut remaining upon the tree, was on the point of gathering it, when Berchmans reminded him of the rule which forbids the young Jesuits to take fruit off of the trees: his young com-

panion jocularly remarking that the rule did not refer to a tree which had been stript of its fruit, nor to a solitary nut, Berchmans no longer insisted upon the point; he was careful however not to allow himself the liberty of such interpretations; in fact, such had been his uniform practice from his first entrance into the noviciate. Another of his self-imposed laws, was to avoid all dispensations. "I will detest every shadow of dispensation in matters of regularity," remarked this holy young man, "which I consider highly pernicious to religious discipline." He equally disliked general permissions, which he thought were usually asked, only to be freed from the importunate yoke of constant dependance: at all events, he thought there was less risk and more merit in having recourse to superiors on particular occasions, with an humble dependance on their good pleasure. These holy maxims were received by his dear companions as so many oracles, which were practised with so much the more exactitude, as being traced in so lively and pleasing a manner in the conduct of Berchmans. Love of regularity flourished amongst these fervent youths; and whilst the servant of God was, as it were, the soul of it, (animating all the others by his fervor,) he little thought that our Divine Lord was making use

of him to enkindle this holy ardor, the effects of which he so much admired in his brethren.

It delighted him to see in this celebrated seminary, such a multitude of religious, flying, in a manner, to discharge their various duties with an emulation which the purest charity alone could produce. All were animated by the same spirit, and moved by the same main-spring, so that the least signal sufficed to draw them all whithersoever God or obedience might call. Nothing could be more gratifying than to observe these young religious during their recreation hours; some walking in the garden, others seated in arbors or in open galleries, all conversing either on their studies or pious subjects; at the first sound of the bell, which rung when the hour of recreation had expired, they instantly retired in silence and recollection, which it was evident their conversation had neither interrupted nor troubled. This excellent order being the effect of well-observed rules, it will not be a subject of surprise that Berchmans cherished them so tenderly, or that he so ardently begged of our Lord grace to observe them faithfully and constantly. He particularly recommended this favor to the intercession of St. Ignatius, persuaded that he still watched over in heaven the observance of those rules which he had bequeathed to his children upon

earth. He did this with redoubled fervor on the festival of his holy father, as he himself acknowledged to one of his companions who had assisted with him at mass in the church of the Gesù. On their return home he was asked what favor he had asked of St. Ignatius. "To die in the society, my dear brother, without having transgressed the least of its rules," answered Berchmans. These beloved rules were ever present to his mind; the book was always open on his table whilst he studied, and at night he placed it under his pillow, sleeping tranquilly whilst his head rested upon that, which, when awake, was so inexpressibly dear to his heart.

However great his love might be for all his rules in general, he was most solicitous about those which referred to purity, and which in fact are the guardians of it. This angelical virtue was the charm of his existence; he had loved it from his infancy, and its brilliancy had never either then or afterwards been tarnished in the slightest degree. His strong inclination to this virtue had been acquired in the chapel of our Blessed Lady at Montaigu. His devotion towards this most spotless Virgin increased every day, and perfected his love of her most favored virtue. Always serious, temperate, and recollected, he watched over, and curbed his

senses against everything that could soil his heart. Nothing could exceed the severity with which he mortified his appetite, considering it to be one of the greatest enemies both of chastity and prayer. To see him at table, one would suppose that he was there for no other purpose than to practice abstinence. As the pleasure which nature is apt to take in eating, is a sort of bait to cupidity, (which often surprises even those who aim at perfection,) Berchmans carefully guarded against it. He invariably left untasted whatever was most palatable; and for the rest, however great might be his necessity for food, he took so little of it, that in a short time his stomach became weakened, and his strength undermined. When warned that his abstemiousness was injuring his health, he answered, that having offered it with everything else into the hands of God, he felt no trouble about it. Nor would he ever allow any extraordinary dishes to be prepared for him, as was sometimes proposed when the common diet seemed to disagree with him, remarking on such occasions, that the blessing of God could make the coarsest food useful to him; and that after all, the consolation of having nothing singular would benefit him more than the most exquisite delicacies.

The caution with which he guarded his eyes

was even still more vigilant; they were constantly cast downwards unless necessity required otherwise; and when any stranger accosted him he would merely take a hasty glance to satisfy himself as to the person he was speaking to, and then resume his usual modest look. If addressed by any one whose voice was familiar to him, he did not raise his eyes, being content to answer with charity and sweetness whatever was desired of him. This reserve became so habitual to him, that it caused him no trouble or inconvenience; he maintained it even in sudden occasions of surprise, where usually the head at least turns round to discover the cause. Some young secular students of philosophy often made a sudden noise, as they afterwards declared, on purpose to put his constant watchfulness to the proof, but they never could succeed in disturbing it. In fine, his sight was so completely under his control, that it was never directed but as he pleased, and so little liberty did he allow it, that several persons who had lived years with him scarcely knew the color of his eyes. Curiosity, which is so natural to strangers who visit Rome, and where there is so much to awaken it, had no power upon him. Neither the splendor of the court, the magnificence of palaces, or the pomp of festivities had any charm for him. The visits of princes and ambassadors

to the college, and the representation of theatrical pieces on certain occasions, were equally uninteresting to him. Being once desired to go and see an exhibition of the latter description, where the young nobles of the college were the performers, he conceived that he should sufficiently satisfy the duty of obedience by being present at it, but he did not think himself obliged to do more; therefore he remained quietly seated without once raising his eyes towards the actors; this was observed by a gentleman who occupied the next seat to Berchmans, and who was struck with admiration at his surprising recollection of mind. Another gentleman of high rank, delighted with the modesty of the young Jesuit, (of which he had seen many instances,) was never tired of speaking of it whenever an opportunity occurred. Visiting Father Ignatius Lomellino, his friend and countryman, and the discourse falling upon the devotions practised in the Jesuits' church, he addressed him thus, "Can you guess what draws me so much to your church, and causes me to attend it so regularly?" "There is no great difficulty in answering your question," replied Father Lomellino, "to one who has the honor of knowing you as I do. A man of piety like yourself would naturally go to assist at vespers and hear the sermons." "That intention is very

good," continued the gentleman, "and were I as good a man in reality as I am in your estimation, I should probably have no other; but I will candidly tell you, that another motive draws me thither, it is the pleasure of observing, without interruption, one of your young Jesuits, whom I have never once seen raise his eyes; he is the perfect image of a saint. From the moment he enters the church until he leaves it, he remains on his knees immovable as a statue, penetrated with devotion, which even appears upon his countenance, and gives him a look altogether angelical." "Oh!" interrupted the Jesuit, "I know of whom you speak; he is a young Fleming; we all admire him as much as you do; in fact, he is looked upon as an angel by the whole college, and we usually propose him to our young students as a model of modesty and devotion. There is not one of our scholars who has not the same opinion of him; they follow him in crowds, drawn by the charms of his sweetness and modesty." We will add another example which deserves to be recorded here. When a newly elected Pope goes to take possession of the church of St. John Lateran, it is customary for the Jesuits to assemble in front of their house, and there await the passage of his Holiness, to receive his benediction. On the day that Pope Gregory XV. was



elected, Berchmans was sent with many others of the college to be present at this solemnity. On his way home being asked by his companion what he thought of the pompous ceremony they had just witnessed, "Pardon me," answered Berchmans, "I scarcely saw anything of it; I was placed in a position which concealed it from my view." This answer, which humility suggested, was nevertheless true, for he had purposely placed himself in the back-ground, where he remained during the whole ceremony engaged in silent prayer; preferring the pleasure of contemplating the celestial glory of Jesus Christ, rather than the gratification of his eyes by the magnificent spectacle and triumphant procession of His Vicar upon earth.

Berchmans' great object was to hide from men what he did for God; thus he mortified himself on every possible occasion, but was most anxious to conceal his mortifications; and he was ingenious in his method of doing this, as will appear in the following example. The Cardinal of Savoy being informed soon after his promotion, that the Jesuits were more particularly gratified at his new dignity, honored them with a visit to the Roman College. As his Eminence had always favored the society, and shown it marks of his good-will and protection, the fathers prepared to give him the most magnificent

reception they were able, in proof of their respect and gratitude. As the Cardinal was particularly partial to the study of languages, in which he excelled, the Jesuits belonging to different countries were desired to compliment his Eminence, each one in his native language. Berchmans was ordered to do it in Flemish, and acquitted himself of the charge with so much elegance, animation, and modesty, that the Cardinal was on the point of praising the performance, which being perceived by Berchmans he quickly glided behind his companions, as if to make place for the next speaker. He took no other interest in the ceremony, and watching his opportunity he slipped out of the room, from whence he went to the kitchen and begged the cook to employ him in some mean office there, which being refused, he repaired to the church, and spent in prayer all the remaining time of the festivity. The delicacy and purity of his love for Jesus Christ was so great, that his only pleasure was to study how he might increase it by the sacrifice of all those satisfactions which are most dear to human nature, but which he believed to be most prejudicial to that holy charity which reigned the sovereign mistress of his heart. Nothing seemed to him more likely to weaken this pure flame than private friendship and partialities. He

detested them from the inmost of his soul, and condemned them in his conversations with his brethren whenever he had the opportunity. "Let us love one another," would he say to them with his usual sweetness and fervor, "but let us love one another in Jesus Christ, with an equal and universal love. We all serve the same master; we are all children of the same order; consequently we should all be of one heart; that friendship which is bestowed upon one individual, is a theft upon all the rest; nature is the source of such a distinction; and so bad a cause can never produce good effects." His own fixed resolution was to love all, but to be particularly familiar with none; to encourage himself to fidelity on this point, he had collected in writing the opinions of the most skilful spiritual masters, and especially the essential marks of these particular friendships which St. Bonaventure has left us in his works, but which I omit for the sake of brevity; however I will just observe, that Berchmans had remarked (like that great saint) that one of the most ordinary defects, especially amongst young people living together consists in the slight familiarities, so opposed to the rules of strict modesty, which intimacy seems to tolerate; such as caressing or touching each other in jest and friendship. He had frequently reflected upon

this sort of freedom, and was persuaded that however innocent it might be in itself, it was not quite conformable to the perfection of purity for which he was so ardently zealous. Our Divine Lord did not fail to recompense the lively and constant attention with which Berchmans watched over the preservation of this celestial virtue; he possessed it in a most eminent degree, being preserved during the whole course of his life from temptations contrary to it, a privilege so rare, as scarcely to be conferred even upon the most innocent souls. Conversing once with one of his companions on the admirable purity of the Queen of Angels, and of the interest she takes in the welfare of those who cherish this virtue, he added, "I am under infinite obligations to her, for having obtained for me of her dear Son an ardent love of chastity, with the precious grace of never being tempted to the contrary vice; I may and ought to say this, in gratitude for her powerful protection, which guards me against the first appearance of danger." Father Cepari confirms this circumstance, though little less than miraculous; and assures us that towards the end of the year 1620, Berchmans, in giving him an account of his conscience, repeated the same thing; declaring that he owed to our Blessed Lady the favor of being preserved from all impurity, even in

his sleep; and more particularly since he had made it his custom to say every night one Ave Maria in honor of the immaculate conception, just before he stepped into bed. Father Cepari further adds, that on the same occasion in the following year, the saintly youth owned with evident consolation of soul, that during the preceding year he had never suffered, either by day or night, sleeping or waking, the least thought or impression contrary to purity.

Thus did the Mother of Virgins perfect in him more and more this virtue so precious to her heart. A Jesuit, well acquainted with the state of his interior, having related this prodigy of grace to the pious and learned Cardinal Bellarmine, he was moved to tears of surprise and joy, exclaiming, "O God, how admirable! what a singular favor in a young man, so lively and full of fire; he may well be called an angel, since he has the purity of one." But when his Eminence was further told, that to look upon him sufficed to inflame the heart with a love of purity, and that his presence alone would dissipate in the minds of others temptations contrary to it, the Cardinal answered, weeping abundantly at the time, that this virtue, being essentially the privilege of the purest of virgins, the holy youth must be very dear to her, to have been favored by her so

pre-eminently in this respect. In effect, it was the constant subject of his prayer to this good Mother, reciting daily the little chaplet of twelve Ave Marias, in honor of her supreme purity. According to the testimony and constant experience of others, one singular grace seemed to be peculiarly his; that namely, those who lived and conversed with him, always quitted his company with a most sensible and tender affection for chastity. If our Divine Lord granted this great privilege to Berchmans during his life, it appears to have increased after his death; many persons, secular as well as religious, having declared to the glory of God and the honor of His servant, that having recommended themselves to the holy young Jesuit, when exposed to imminent dangers of sinning against chastity, they received from him immediate succor, which subdued the risings of concupiscence at the moment even that the danger seemed most pressing. Some, in gratitude for so signal a benefit, publicly acknowledged that they owed it to Berchmans' intercession; others who wished to give more positive proofs of their gratitude, brought offerings of devotion to his tomb, having previously promised to do so, if their trials were removed or relieved by his intervention.

In the conduct of God towards His saints, it

has often been remarked, that besides the essential glory which He honors them with, and which He confers upon each in proportion to his sanctity and merits, He likewise communicates to them an accidental glory peculiar to each one alone, which procures for them the especial veneration of the faithful. And He does this by imparting to them some degree of His own supernatural power, for the cure of those vices most opposite to the respective virtues which chiefly distinguish each particular saint. In this view, we may consider that Berchmans was rendered most efficacious against the vice of impurity, and most charitable and zealous in succoring those who suffer from its dangerous attacks. God, so infinitely liberal towards His servants, and who is pleased to crown His own works in them, began even in this life to recompense (by so great a favor) a purity so angelical as seldom to be equalled excepting in heaven.

The great apostle tells us that our Divine Master destines us to a crown of justice, but that to merit it He requires of us that we apply vigorously to the affair of our sanctification; that having by his goodness graciously begun it, it belongs to us courageously to pursue it with corresponding fidelity. That such was the conduct of Berchmans, the sequel of this history will evidently prove.

Divine Providence in creating Berchmans, bestowed on him a constitution best suited to a life of virtue, and which should serve as the foundation-stone in the spiritual edifice which the Holy Ghost designed to perfect and consecrate by His grace. The lively ardor of his character only made him more susceptible of the impressions of Divine love, but never troubled the equal serenity of his soul. His conduct was uniform, gentle, and courteous. The operations of grace found no obstacle either in his well-regulated mind or heart; the kingdom of God was securely established there as on a throne of truth and justice. Hence, sprung up in his soul that source of peace which was never disturbed, and which enabled him so lovingly to enjoy the presence of his God. No cloud ever obscured his countenance, and his whole person seemed to combine a pleasing mixture of reserve and cheerfulness which edified and delighted every one. Although he was grave and serious, there was nothing of melancholy about him; in fact, he frankly owned that he had no idea what it could be, at least from practical experience, for on one occasion that he had heard a public discourse made by the rector of the college, on the pernicious effects which melancholy is capable of producing in religious souls, Berchmans and



his companions conversing afterwards upon the subject, and compassionating the misfortune of those who are under the influence of this dangerous passion, the former concluded his remarks by adding, "However, what I say is said upon the authority of father-rector, for, thanks to the goodness of God, I have never experienced it myself."

As there was nothing of sadness in his gravity, so likewise there was nothing dissipated in his cheerfulness. His laugh, always moderate, was sometimes seen but never heard. His constant easy uniformity of conduct, was free from all affectation; his conversation was cheerful, though always holy and conformable to the spirit of divine grace which filled his soul; its charms consisted in the lively and affectionate feeling which animated all he said and did; and never was he known to notice (much less to ridicule) the weaknesses or peculiarities of others, for which, on the contrary, he showed all sweetness and charity. If corrected or reprimanded by others, he expressed the greatest gratitude, but when commended, a blush was his only answer. Praise was the only thing which seemed to alter the serenity of his countenance; on all other occasions, the most unforeseen accidents could not disturb his tranquillity. Besides his total and inviolable de

pendence upon the holy will of God, which was the ground-work of his happy peaceful state of mind, it was no doubt much increased by the spirit of regularity which directed his exterior conduct, every hour had its appointed duty, no moment was left either to caprice or idleness. He drew up his distribution of time twice a year, namely, during the retreats which are made in the society before the renovation of vows. He was careful to specify in his plan of regularity all his ordinary actions, and also all those which he foresaw might possibly occur, together with the spirit and method he was to observe in the practice of all; he did this to prevent being taken by surprise or unawares. To this cautious foresight may be added the strict attention which he gave to all his words and actions, never doing or saying anything without entering into himself and consulting the Holy Ghost as his oracle. One of his companions, surprised to see him conduct himself always with the same wisdom in his actions as well as in his words, asked him how it happened that such appropriate answers always occurred to his mind at the right moment and yet in so many different occasions. Berchmans modestly replied, "I believe it is because I always weigh and measure my words in the sight of God before I pronounce them." It

was this sacred art which taught him so well how to govern his tongue; he applied himself to this from the moment he entered into religion, being fully persuaded that it was of the highest importance to regulate and curb its movements. He practised to the letter St. James's instruction upon this subject; by this necessary but too much neglected circumspection, he was enabled always to speak what and as he wished; nor did he ever wish to speak but to the honor and glory of God, or for the consolation of his brethren. It is true his conversation was always holy, but he managed it with so much simplicity, sweetness, and candor, that no one ever felt tired of listening to him. He generally preferred leaving the conversation to others, showing much more pleasure in hearing them speak than in speaking himself; disliking an overflow of words, however holy, under the idea that the best thing should be used with moderation, and that satiety is always to be avoided lest the appetite be spoiled. Reserved as he was during the hour of recreation, he was still more so in the time of silence; he never made use of the liberty which the rule allows of speaking in few words to a passer-by. Nothing but necessity, obedience, or charity, could unclothe his lips on these occasions; and no sooner had he in a low tone satisfied the

demand, than he resumed his usual silence. So great was his exactness, that he would check himself in the middle of a word if the bell at that instant rung to announce the end of recreation. A companion of his studies, who had leave to call upon him in his room to ask his help when he met with any difficult passage, was always very kindly received and assisted, but as soon as the question was solved, Berchmans stopped the conversation; or if more time were required for examining the proposed difficulty, he would beg his dear brother to defer the business until the hour allowed by the rule for conversation. He carried his respect and consideration for the foreign Jesuits to a very high degree; nevertheless, he would not allow it to interfere with his strict observance of silence. One of these fathers, who had shown Berchmans great kindness at Loretto, arriving at Rome, met him suddenly, and after the first affectionate salutations, was beginning to converse with him in an easy familiar manner; but our holy youth modestly excused himself, begging the good father would allow him first to go and ask permission, and then return to entertain himself in his company: this little circumstance much edified the stranger, and increased his already favorable opinion of his young brother.

Nothing could exceed the pleasure which every one felt in his society, which was eagerly sought by all, though he on his part was quite indifferent as to whom he conversed with, for he sincerely loved and esteemed all without either preference or distinction; and they, knowing that nothing gave him greater pleasure in recreation than to speak of the things of God, very willingly excluded all profane subjects; those which were indifferent were lightly passed over to fix upon those which were most holy, every one saying with candor and simplicity whatever the Spirit of God inspired. Those who were his superiors in age, were always willing to hear him introduce these discourses, which he did in so respectful a manner, that the most jealous of their own authority could not possibly take offence. He was less reserved with his equals, and whilst he considered himself the last and least of all, they esteemed him as their master, and felt themselves happy in being able to profit by his example and discourse. A remark which he had committed to paper, and which was found after his death, is singular enough to deserve notice; namely, that he had never found any difficulty in introducing pious conversation, excepting on two occasions, and then not because any of the party was opposed to it, but simply because so many happened to be assembled to-

gether at the same time, so that it was difficult to continue a discourse upon any single subject without frequent interruption. This trifling incident pained him somewhat for the moment, and made him determine to avoid a crowd for the future whenever it was in his power; he recommended the same thing to others, using for the purpose these consoling words of our Divine Master, "When two or three are assembled together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And then he would add, "What a happiness for us, my dear brothers, to have so good a Master for our dear companion; but it is on condition that we assemble two or three together, not more. This circumstance He Himself has condescended to notice; and experience teaches us, that when there are large numbers, there is but little facility either of speaking of Him, or of enjoying the blessing of His presence." He did not think that conversing in the name of Jesus could be reconciled with the custom of talking about frivolous news, or vain curiosities. If he found himself in company with others engaged on such subjects, he would endeavor to change them to such as were more useful; and he could generally succeed herein; but if the company consisted of his elders, or persons to whom he owed consideration and respect, he did not attempt to take this pious liberty, but

recollecting, and placing himself in the presence of God, he closed his ears to the voice of creatures, to attend only to that of his Creator. Two distinguished Jesuits, wishing to have personal experience of Berchmans' conduct in this respect, seeing him approach them, broke off their discourse, and began to speak of war and other things as foreign to their state. They were gratified to find their experiment had succeeded, for the servant of God, after the first salutations of civility, let them continue their discourse without attempting to join in it, and entering into himself he remained silent, until the fathers, edified by this proof of his interior spirit, resumed the subject of piety, which they had only interrupted to make a trial of Berchmans' fidelity. Joining in pious discourse was never difficult to him; divine love had made him ingenious in this holy art; and he made a point of committing to memory everything that he thought would edify and recreate his companions. He was particularly assiduous in collecting whatever was most moving and instructive in the annals of the society, and of the Lives of Saints, or other distinguished characters, who have illustrated it; their actions, and most remarkable traits of character, were familiar to him; and his ever-faithful memory was sure to recall them, at the very moment

that it would be most useful to introduce them; at the same time, he would endeavor to associate with their memory some point of the rules or constitutions which seemed to bear upon the subject; and whenever he spoke of these with his companions, he always inspired them with an increased love and esteem of them. We owe to Berchmans' zeal and industry (sanctioned by the approbation of superiors) a pious custom amongst the numerous youth of the Roman College, of establishing a sort of spiritual academy, the discussions to be held on recreation days. The idea was entirely Berchmans'; he drew up the plan of it, and maintained its practice with constant fervor and assiduity; the custom continues to the present day, and is of great advantage to the young Jesuits. In these academical meetings spiritual subjects were treated of in order and with strict regularity. They were generally held in the country, and if in the summer, they met together in a pleasant arbor belonging to their country house, at the appointed hour; and then every one freely said what he thought upon the subject, which had been agreed upon some days before. If the subject chosen was some particular virtue, the first speaker explained its nature; the second distinguished its several acts; a third described its advantages; a fourth proposed its motives;



another the means to acquire it; this one discovered its difficulties; that other brought forward texts from the constitutions which referred to it; or examples of it, gathered from the lives of early fathers of the order. Every one had full liberty to propose any doubts which might arise in the course of the discussion; which were to be cleared up then, unless the difficulty should be so great as to require the experienced judgment of an elder father; they did this in order to maintain unanimity, for this holy youthful assembly was extremely cautious to banish from it the slightest symptom of contention. Thus did they spend their hours in pious discourses, through the address of our saintly young Jesuit, who was considered the soul of this devotion; whilst he himself reaped from it most precious fruit, for by this means recreation days became as valuable as days of retreat. He stood little in need of these latter, his habitually profound recollection made his life one continual retreat; nevertheless, he omitted no opportunity of making particular retreats; besides that of eight or ten days, made always at the close of the year, and the other of two or three days, previous to the renovation of vows, he dedicated some hours on communion days, and one entire day in every month, to retirement and recollection.

The latter is still piously practised in the society, in order to be better able to preserve the spirit of fervor acquired in the noviciate.

We will here trace Berchmans' method of performing it, that it may serve as a model to the many young Jesuits who are now studying to imitate him. He looked upon it as a kind of spiritual solemnity, which he celebrated at the commencement of every month: he began his preparation on the eve by penances and humiliations. With permission of his superior he did not join in the ordinary evening's recreation, depriving himself of all communication with creatures, to prepare himself the better for that of his Creator, which he hoped to enjoy the next day. During this time of silence he regulated the exercises of the following day, not to lose the least part of it in uncertainty and deliberation, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost. He fell asleep, filled with pious sentiments, and scarcely was the night past, than he arose with alacrity and fervor to begin this day of grace in the best manner he was able, adoring with profound reverence Him who was the Author of it, and consecrating to Him every instant of this so precious a day. He earnestly invoked the intercession of his patron saints, but more particularly of Her who is the sovereign of them all, the incomparable

Mother of God. He spent the day at the foot of his crucifix, seriously examining in the presence of Jesus Christ, whether he had advanced or fallen back in His service; and whether he hoped to have made some progress, or that he feared he had not advanced enough, he attributed whatever appeared good to the grace of Almighty God, and to his own tepidity and negligence whatever seemed defective in his conduct. He wept most bitterly for the infidelities he thought he had committed against a God so good, and he took every precaution to prevent future relapses. He carefully endeavored to distinguish the graces which he had received during the past month, and those which he hoped to receive in the course of the ensuing month; in fine, after specifying in detail what our Divine Lord might justly exact from his future fidelity, he concluded his devotion by a firm and sincere resolution to spare no pains to please Him, and also to use his best endeavors to become a saint; this had been his earnest desire from a very early age, as we have already remarked, a thought that was ever present to his mind. "I am not a true Jesuit," he would very often say, "unless I am a saint; and if I do not hasten to become such whilst I am young, I have reason to fear that I shall never be one." Towards the so-

ciety, which furnished so many means of sanctification, he felt the highest esteem, and could not speak of it without transport: he called it his dear society, the society of his heart, the work of an Almighty finger, and the lively image of the life our Blessed Lord led on earth: not that he intended to exalt it above other religious orders, but he considered it just and lawful to feel for his own all the esteem and respect which a good son owes to a tender mother, and he supposed that every religious person felt the same towards the institute of which he was a member. This filial devotion to his order did not prevent him from honoring all other orders approved of by the Church: whoever wore the habit of religion was an object of respect to him; hence we cannot wonder that his own was so precious to him; to show his love of it, he always kissed it most respectfully before he clothed himself with it, as was discovered from his memorandums after his death. In imitation of Berchmans, this pious custom is very much in use even to the present day in the society. "I was sensibly affected," says his spiritual director, "at the wonderful devotion with which he was penetrated when speaking of the benefit of his vocation. 'O great and inestimable favor!' said he a few months before his death; 'how contented, how

happy I am, my dear father, to have the happiness of living and the hope of dying in the society! During the last six months, I feel that my love for it has redoubled: thanks to the infinite mercy of our Lord, (who called me to it,) I have never, from the moment I entered it, had the least thought or temptation to quit it.'” The high opinion which he had of it was grounded upon the conviction, that Heaven had inspired St. Ignatius when compiling his admirable rule; he admired the secure means employed by this sagacious founder to prevent the ruin of his order, but particularly those two doors belonging to the spiritual edifice, the one closed to good workmen, the other open to those who will not study to become such. This great respect for St. Ignatius and his institute, was not peculiar to Berchmans alone. One of the most learned Pontiffs that had ruled the Church of God on earth, declared the same thing nearly in the same terms; adding, that he had no sooner read through the rules, than he recognized the finger of God guiding the pen of St. Ignatius. In fine, this opinion has been universal amongst the most enlightened and illustrious persons. A celebrated cardinal of the last century, whose wise policy governed France and astonished Europe, declared that with the institute of Ignatius he would under

take to rule the world. The reader must pardon this little digression, which Berchmans' love and esteem of his order has insensibly introduced. Loving the mother thus tenderly, we cannot wonder that the children were so inexpressibly dear to him: he respected them as his superiors, but cherished them as his brethren. If a person had once had any spiritual authority over him, that character was never effaced from his mind. The priesthood produced the same deferential feeling; and whoever was elevated to either of these dignities, was always treated with profound veneration by our holy young Jesuit: he lost no occasion of showing this respect; and even when walking with them in the city, he kept the distance of about a step behind them, being too humble to consider himself on terms of equality with them. On the arrival of any foreign father at the Roman College, it was sufficient that he wore the habit of the society to secure the esteem and attentions of Berchmans, who would immediately quit his more familiar associates to welcome and assist the stranger, showing him the same respect and honor which he would to Jesus Christ. This holy eagerness was founded upon our Saviour's consoling assurance, "He that receives you, receives Me." He would exclaim sometimes transported with

joy, "What goodness, what condescension on the part of our Creator, to place to His own account the services which we render to His creatures!"

He well knew that charity was not only the spirit of the Gospel, but likewise the spirit of St. Ignatius and his first companions, who bequeathed it to the society, having drawn it from the sacred heart of their Divine Master, and therefore to be cherished as a legacy of love, and to be constantly maintained and exercised. When we are enlightened by such celestial light, we make no distinction, in imitation of St. Paul, between Jew and Gentile, domestic or stranger; for receiving all in the name of Jesus, the same marks of benevolence and kindness should be shown to all. Solidly grounded in these principles, Berchmans' affection for his dear brothers was universal, or if he ever made any distinction, it was in favor of those who were the least considerable, either for offices or talents, studying herein the example of our Saviour, who bestowed a greater proportion of his favors upon the poor, in preference to the rich. Berchmans was particularly kind to the temporal coadjutors, as those are called who are admitted into the society to perform the household duties; he had great pleasure in conversing with them, because he there discovered

that holy littleness which he himself so passionately loved, together with a candor and simplicity well suited to converse on the things of God. These simple brothers, whom he respected for their innocence, and other graces which he perceived Almighty God bestowed upon them, loved him in return with a most tender and respectful love; they revered him as a saint, and consulted him as their oracle; as soon as they had discharged the duty of their offices, they would repair immediately to him, and recount to him their various little trials, and they always derived from his instructive advice an unction which encouraged them under present labors, and fortified them to bear cheerfully those which were to come. He spoke to them in a manner so suited to their capacities, so conformable to their dispositions, and in a manner so likely to gain their affection, that he could in fact, persuade them to do anything he wished, and as he never sought to persuade them any other thing than the love of our Divine Lord, these good brothers never left him without being more and more confirmed in their determination to love and serve so good a Master; a feeling which may be attributed to Berchmans' example even more than to his words. Never did they experience the delight of his society and kindness so effectually as



during illness, when his tender care and solicitude were redoubled; then his animated faith considering only Jesus Christ in their persons, took every opportunity of visiting and consoling Him in these His humble servants. Fixed, as it were, to the bedside, he at once performed the office of consoler, servant, and infirmarian. In Italy, during the summer season, the heat for a few hours of the day is sometimes excessively oppressive, especially to invalids; he was ingenious in devising methods to mitigate this inconvenience, and when he could do nothing better, he would fetch fresh water from the fountain wherewith to bathe their hands and refresh their parched lips. But with all this, his principal aim was to teach them how their sufferings might become meritorious, by uniting them with those of Jesus Christ, and presenting them to the Eternal Father through the hands of our Blessed Lady. To supply, in some manner, the loss of public exhortations, which illness prevented their being present at, he used to repeat them afterwards for their edification and instruction. These poor sick brothers seemed half cured whilst he was with them, and were never wearied or fatigued, however long his visits might last. Once, when the malady appeared contagious, he was desired not to enter the infirmary; in this circumstance where his

charity was restrained by obedience, he endeavored to reconcile the two virtues together, depriving himself, for the sake of obedience, of the pleasure of visiting the sick, yet not ceasing to be charitable, for he was constantly inquiring about them, and charging the infirmarian to assure them that, though unable to visit them, his heart was in the infirmary.

Although he was thus affectionate and attentive to the sick, he was no less so to those who were in health. He always found leisure to serve every body in the house, and whatever his occupations might be, none of them appeared to him more necessary than the exercise of charity. He did not belong to that class of persons who are always overpowered with business when their aid is required; nor was he one of those, who, when they do oblige, do it so ungraciously that they spoil their good offices by the manner in which they are done. For his part, he knew not what it was to feel a difficulty in obliging; he was always before hand in offering his services, and when opportunity of conferring pleasure occurred to him, we may say that the pleasure was doubled by the cheerful affability which seasoned it. He was the general companion, called upon by the fathers to accompany them when they had occasion to walk the streets. Many chose to have him on account of his modest,

edifying manner, and all called upon him on account of his obliging good will. One day that he had great need of applying assiduously to his studies, he was pressed by an elder father to accompany him through the city; he felt at the moment some slight repugnance, which, however, he did not allow to appear, and complied with the request in his usual prompt manner; but on his return home, making a serious reflection upon the impulse which had risen for the moment in his soul, the humble, charitable young man was confounded; he thought himself guilty of feeling pain in performing an act of kindness, and to prevent any such surprises of nature for the future, he made it for some time the subject of his particular examen; distrusting his own heart, which he believed had betrayed him, he carefully watched all its movements, and subjected them so completely to the empire of charity, that he never afterwards experienced the slightest difficulty in its practice, even under the most unforeseen circumstances. When his philosophical disputations were concluded, he had abundant opportunity of exercising it, for scarcely had he reached home with one father, than he was sent out with another; so that it not unfrequently happened to him to go out in this manner three or four times in a day during the excessive summer

heat. On some such occasion one of his young companions was moved with compassion on seeing him return quite exhausted and covered with perspiration. "You are surely not thinking of what you are about," said he to Berchmans; "if you continue this game much longer you will certainly become quite ill: where is your discretion?" "I have left it in the hands of my superior," answered Berchmans, with his usual sweetness and cheerfulness; "it is his place to command, and mine to obey."

On another occasion that he was engaged in prayer, one of his fellow-students came in great haste, begging he would accompany him in his walk. Berchmans made no difficulty to leave God for God, and to leave his prayer for the sake of charity. The young man who had chosen him for his companion, conducted him immediately to the Carthusian monastery, and inquiring for the superior, he withdrew with him, leaving Berchmans in another room quite ignorant of his design. Enlightened however by a supernatural light, as soon as his companion had rejoined him, he thus accosted him. "It is in vain to attempt concealment, my dear brother, this is a temptation of the devil, who under various pretexts seeks to withdraw you from the society, but you shall not leave us." The young man, whose vocation really was

shaken, was much surprised to find that the secret of his heart was thus known to his holy companion; but he was still more surprised, when upon inviting Berchmans to assist at the sermon in the church of the Gesù, he firmly persisted in refusing to do so, (a thing very unusual with him,) and he insisted upon returning home immediately. The object of the young man in seeking to obtain this delay, was that he might be able to return alone to the Chartreuse, and conclude his arrangements for quitting the Jesuits, in order to enter amongst the Carthusians, but his object was defeated by the clear-sightedness of Berchmans, who, immediately they had reached the college, repaired to the superior and informed him of the state of his young associate's mind. The poor young man had got the idea that he should be of no use to the society, that he was incapable of serving it, that an order which had little or no intercourse with seculars would be better suited to his disposition, and that he should there work out his salvation with greater security. But no sooner had he entered his superior's apartment, (who sent for him upon receiving Berchmans' communication,) than his trouble of mind was instantly dissipated, he felt resolved to live and die a good Jesuit, as in fact he happily did by the grace of Jesus Christ and the charity of his

zealous companion, to whom under God he ever after acknowledged himself indebted for so great a favor. The holy prior of the Carthusians, who had been thus reluctantly called out of his solitude to undertake this affair, was most happy to hear of the young man's altered sentiments, and as he had in common with his order a great regard for the Society of Jesus, he was delighted to learn from the young Jesuit himself, his determination to persevere. Berchmans felt deeply convinced that this perseverance was the seal of predestination in a religious soul, that it was impossible to separate one from the other; and hence he looked upon the grace of dying in religion as one of the most infallible assurances of salvation. "How can it possibly be otherwise?" said he, with the look and manner of a seraph, "is it possible to die a Jesuit without dying a saint? it is true we cannot merit the latter grace, but we may hope it when we have the former. Yes, it depends upon ourselves to be saints by following the rules of our holy institute; let us not imagine that it is necessary for this purpose to perform great and extraordinary actions. No; our perfection consists in doing our common duties with an uncommon love of God." This principle was deeply graven in the heart of Berchmans, and was ever present to his mind.

His great devotion was to observe the rules of the community. "Of all mortifications," said he, "that which gives me the greatest pleasure, and to which I most willingly attach myself, is to discharge with strict fidelity all the duties of community life." One of the most striking characteristics of his virtue was the absence of all singularity; he never stepped beyond the beaten path; the slightest duties, if prescribed to the community, were precious in his sight, not only because it was a favorite maxim with him, to esteem little things, but chiefly, because being common to others, and being regulated by superiors, he found therein less danger of gratifying self-love, and more certainty of practicing the love of God. From amongst numerous examples we will select but one, which though trivial in itself, is not less worthy of record, if we estimate actions as we ought, by the motive which animates them, and by the virtuous circumstances which enhance their value. Berchmans took no pleasure in amusing games, he preferred conversing with his brothers either on spiritual or studious subjects. Nevertheless, as certain games or trials of skill were permitted, in order to divert these young men, and to unbend their minds, so continually engaged in serious application, he generally yielded to their pressing solicitations, and joined in their

games with great cheerfulness, notwithstanding the repugnance he really felt for everything of the sort; whether he lost or gained, the sweet serenity of his countenance never altered. When the game seemed doubtful, he expressed his opinion without heat or contention; if he triumphed he was not elated, and if he was vanquished he was just as joyous as the victors, and kneeling down he immediately recited the prayer which had previously been agreed upon as the price of victory. Such were the innocent amusements of these fervent youths, which were always animated by obedience, meekness, and modesty. These were the steps by which Berchmans mounted to so high a degree of sanctity as to be looked upon as a perfect model of a young Jesuit, more particularly during the scholastic term. Whilst upon this subject it will not be amiss to trace the excellent method he pursued in his studies, and the admirable alliance which he made of the most tender devotion with the dry speculations of science. According to the evidence of the professors under whom he studied philosophy and mathematics during three years, his mind was of the most comprehensive order; capable of the highest sciences, possessed of a retentive memory, a quick conception, a solid judgment, in fine, all that could enab'e him to become



learned with little trouble on his part; nevertheless, he took as much pains to supply the want of talent, as he could have done had he in reality been possessed of none. Excelling his fellow-students by diligence and facility in learning, it is easy to imagine how much he must have been their superior in ability; yet he made no account of these advantages; his humility was far greater than his learning. If he studied more than others, it was from no vain desire of superiority, but merely that he might be better able to serve the society, as he always observed, when admonished that his excessive application was injurious to his health; adding, that in a religious no application could be too great, since his zeal and capacity ought to be without measure.

The elevated idea he had of his sublime vocation was a sort of goad, which constantly urged him forward with generous emulation, to pursue the thorny career of abstract sciences, which beginners usually find so difficult and repulsive. Philosophy alone did not satisfy either the activity of his mind, or the assiduity of his study: he added to it mathematics, from which physics derive such help, and borrow such certain light; to these studies, comprehensive as they were, he added history and languages; and in fact, neglected no means of ac-

- quiring useful information. This assemblage of different ideas caused no confusion in his well-regulated mind; all was arranged there in most distinct order, to be subservient to use when necessity might require it. His masters, who discerned the extent of his mental powers, charged him with this multiplicity of study; for in this, as in everything else, he acted only by obedience, without which he would not so much as cast his eye upon a book, persuaded that in study, no less than in devotion, the best security of advancement is to act with dependance upon the advice of those whom God has given us for superiors. But as we have already remarked, the variety of his studies did not impede the progress of the one grand lesson, perfection, to which he always dedicated his best hours, looking upon the rest as only accessories, bestowing upon them that time which others usually spent either in useless visits or in entertainments little to the purpose.

He had made it an inviolable practice from his first entrance into the noviciate, to fill up every vacant moment by some exercise, either of piety or study: this resolution was much strengthened during the time he lived in the Roman College: he very frequently renewed it in his meditations, (as we learn from his memoranda,) protesting before God, to apply with

unremitting ardor to attain the end of his vocation; adding, "I will apply most seriously and constantly to my studies, as to one of the most efficacious means to reach this end: I did not enter into religion to lead an idle life, but to labor: it was only on this condition that the Father of the family condescended to open the door of His house in my favor: to correspond, therefore, with His goodness, I must do my utmost to render myself able to glorify Him throughout the world. Alas! how many labor only to dishonor Him! ungrateful should I be if I did not seek His honor! True glory consists in advancing the glory of God; and I shall never succeed in this unless I give all the application of my mind to study, and all the affections of my heart to virtue." As he had drawn up his plan of conduct for the latter, so did he likewise minutely regulate the order of his studies. He wrote for this purpose a small treatise, which he entitled, "The Perfect Scholar of the Society." It shall be inserted in the 4th book of this Life. The model he there drew of a perfect student was accomplished in his person, for he was a faithful copy of it, so that it may with truth be said, that he sanctified himself as much by study as by the study of sanctity. Towards his masters he ever showed the most profound respect; they were

oracles in his regard ; he received their opinions with docility, and maintained them with ardor. Sometimes his companions would oppose them for the mere pleasure of making Berchmans argue in their defence, which he did in so lively and animated a manner, yet at the same time with so much modesty and civility, that whilst he honored the doctrine of his professors, he never offended those who were pretending to oppose him. In order to obtain from Heaven the gift of wisdom, he often recited the prayer of Solomon, "Give me, O Lord, a share of that wisdom which assists at Thy councils, that it may labor with me and remain with me." He always recited it on his knees, and he candidly owned that he derived more light from it than from the most profound speculations. He never separated study from prayer, and as it was impossible for him to pray more frequently than he did, so neither could he study with greater application ; the excess to which he carried it often occasioned serious headaches ; his remedy in these cases, was to read some spiritual book or recite the beads, which never failed to relieve him, so great was the pleasure produced by prayer and pious lecture. When our Divine Lord was pleased to leave Berchmans in obscurity of mind, (which sometimes happened,) he would go at the appointed hour to

expose his difficulty to his master, acting with great respect and precaution. If he found the professor pre-engaged, he waited silently at the door until the person within had finished; then entering with his eyes cast down, making a profound reverence, he proposed his doubts, always standing bare-headed, unless expressly ordered to put on his cap, and even then he always raised his cap at the beginning of each new subject. When the answer was given, if he did not clearly understand it, (which very seldom happened,) "Excuse me, father," he would say with great humility and modesty, "if I trouble you to repeat your solution, I do not as yet comprehend it well." If when made tolerably clear, he still remained unsatisfied, he always replied in a manner which appeared less a contradiction than an inquiry for more ample explanations, which were no sooner given than he would retire with thanks, carefully avoiding to introduce any superfluous subject of conversation.

After having employed the first hours of the day in prayer and study, he prepared himself for class duties by a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Not to be hurried in the performance of this devotion, he always left his room some time before the bell rung; upon hearing it he rose from the spot where he had been kneeling,

waiting at the door for admission in strict silence, with a book in his hand that he might lose no time. During the class-hours his eyes never wandered from his books, and nothing seemed able to divert his attention from the then present duty. He was never heard to complain either that the dictation was too rapid or continued too long; if any word escaped that he could not write at the moment, he left a space for it to be filled up after the lesson, not to break silence during the time it lasted. According to his custom he made a repetition of the lesson afterwards to some young scholars of distinction, who had formed amongst themselves a sort of academy, which terminated immediately the clock summoned them to some other duty; for however much these young people might regret the loss of his company, Berchmans preferred his duty to the pleasure they would all have felt in remaining longer together. He quitted class with the same silence and recollection that had accompanied him to it, never allowing himself the liberty of speaking a word. He used the utmost reserve in his scholastic disputations, and when it was his turn to debate, he proposed his arguments with powerful vivacity, yet always giving his opponent full leisure to repeat them, to examine them, and to disprove them if he could, but

never interrupting him till his chain of arguments was ended, which Berchemans would immediately resume, would combat the answer, expose its weak points, and crush it by the mere force of intellect; yet he did this without raising his voice immoderately, and without the slightest change of countenance. In fine, his manner altogether proved how totally unconscious he was of his own superiority. When it was his turn to defend a point, he maintained throughout the discussion the utmost presence of mind, enlivened however by a discreet and graceful energy which delighted every one. He was attentive to every word of the proposed argument, subtle and prompt in giving his solutions, clear and precise in defending the opinions of his master, modest and reserved in refuting those of his adversary, and thus gave equal proofs of his virtue and of his capacity. Both of these appeared in full lustre at his examination in philosophy, which happily took place on the day dedicated by the Church to the festival of St. Joseph. He begged of this great saint (the spouse of our Blessed Lady) to be his protector, and of this holy Mother, that she would condescend to be his mediatrix with her dear Son, in whom are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and science of the Eternal Father." He added many penances to his

prayer ; and, to omit nothing on his part which might draw down the benedictions of Heaven, he went to the father-rector, a moment or two before the examination began, to beg his blessing and prayers. The success answered such holy dispositions. Nothing could surpass the solidity and clearness with which he answered the arguments of the fathers ; he satisfied them so completely, that they unanimously chose him to maintain the whole course of philosophical disputations. He received this mark of their consideration and esteem with the most sincere conviction of his own unworthiness. And as he had an extreme aversion for everything which might bring him honor, he dreaded this much, and felt himself strongly inspired in prayer to refuse it, unless his confessor judged that it might contribute to the glory of God. His wise director listened to his reasons and approved of his sentiments, but wished him to undertake the task in a spirit of obedience, and he discharged it in a manner which gained the applause of the whole assembly.

He acquitted himself with the same success in all his other duties, particularly in those which were common to the young students of the society. He looked upon his superiors as the representatives of God to him, and those rules which related to them were of such im-



portance in his sight, that he was as exact in them as he was in those duties which referred immediately to Almighty God Himself. This impression inspired him with a filial veneration for their persons and character, which made him sometimes say that there would be little merit in obeying, if the merit of obedience consisted only in the pain of receiving, or in the difficulty of accomplishing, the orders given; that his duty in this respect had always been conformable to his inclination; that from the moment he became a Jesuit, he had always considered as fathers those whom Providence had assigned him for masters, and that consequently he had never felt the least objection to them, nor any difficulty in submitting to their will. It is the practice in the Roman College for the students in philosophy to serve a mass every morning. The one which fell to Berchmans' share was unusually long, and occupied a good part of the time which was most proper for study; yet he never had a thought to ask to have it changed; and when, after some time, a change was made in the arrangement, it was to desire Berchmans to serve the mass of a good father whose infirmities made him unable to appoint any fixed hour for the purpose; consequently he was liable to be called, now at one hour, now at another, thus interfering sadly

with his time of study. The sacristan expressing his compassion at the inconvenience, "I deserve none, my dear brother," answered Berchmans, with his usual composure; "it can at no time be troublesome to obey, more particularly when we have the honor of serving at the holy sacrifice of the mass." Animated with these pious sentiments, he went daily to the professed house, there to devote the morning to this holy exercise, of which even angels may be jealous, the manner in which he discharged this duty giving him a strong resemblance to these celestial beings. His love of God continually drew him to the presence of the Blessed Sacrament; he never lost an opportunity of repairing thither to offer his respectful homage.

He was always glad when any of the fathers called him to accompany them in their visits to our different houses in the town, because whilst they were arranging affairs, he took the opportunity of retiring to the church; he was however most punctual in being at the door again at the moment which the father had appointed. It was a great pleasure to him to accompany those who were desired to catechise in the public places; but when he himself was commissioned to do it, his joy was inexpressibly great. Being one day ordered to go for this pious purpose to a street near to the church

of our Lady on the Mount, he found a sort of table surrounded by gamblers and other profligate characters; he wished to stand upon this table that he might be more easily heard by the crowd around; but these rude men would not allow it, and ordered him to go off elsewhere, applying at the same time the most insulting epithets. Berchmans, with great composure, and without even a change of countenance, entered the church of our Lady, where he made a short prayer; then returning to the spot where he had left the gamblers, he stepped upon the table in the midst of them all, no one daring to oppose him, and began to preach as usual. Scarcely had he uttered the first few words, than (according to the prediction he made to his companion a moment or two before) these men surrounded him and listened with the greatest attention till the instruction was ended, which so touched their hearts, that they threw down their dice and cards at the feet of the holy young preacher, and conducted him back with honor to the college doors. The art of instructing the minds and moving the hearts of his hearers, was so peculiar in Berchmans, that, young as he was, he was charged with the spiritual instruction of the servants. This office was just suited to his own inclination, and he acquitted himself of it so perfectly, that all

of them well understood what they were obliged to believe and practise for the perfection and salvation of their souls. He induced them to adopt the good custom of frequent confession, and that they might give general edification, he made them communicate altogether at the same mass with those of the house who were not yet admitted to the priesthood, which communion is given by the superior. This enlightened man continually exercised the obedience and humility of Berchmans; he took pleasure in charging him with acts both of one and the other; he received the orders with joy, and practised them with alacrity. Being desired to assist the spiritual father in taking care of his room, he kept it so neat and clean, and so well provided with the little conveniences suited to a man of his years, and was besides so quiet and so little importunate, that the good father was quite delighted. Although his own room was very scantily furnished, he loved it tenderly, and might always be found in it, unless piety, obedience, or charity, called him elsewhere. "I will love," said he, "this dear cell;" for he had learned from St. Bernard, that God was to be found there no less than in heaven; and that the true means to make a Paradise of it, was to remain much in it. He was careful whilst in it not to inconvenience

his companions: to whom, however, he gave full liberty to do just as they pleased, assuring them that nothing could give him greater trouble than to feel that his presence imposed any restraint upon them. His affability and kind consideration made his companions all eager to share his room with him; not that it was more convenient or more ornamented than the rest; on the contrary, it was the most plain and unadorned of any, having barely the furniture of the holy prophet's chamber. He would have had a scruple to have admitted the least ornament, and would have thought himself wanting in the spirit of poverty, had his lodging been provided with everything convenient. In compliance with his rule, he loved poverty as he would have loved his own mother, and was delighted to bear the marks of it about his person, and in everything he made use of, being more fearful of superfluity than most persons are of wanting necessities. He had brought with him from Flanders a sash of a somewhat finer texture than those usually worn in the Roman College; he had no rest until he had got rid of it. It was the same with some engravings which had been given to him: he placed them all in the hands of his superiors, even those inscribed with the names of the friends who had given them to him, fear-

ful that if he retained these small pledges of affection, the perfect love of Jesus might thereby suffer from a division of his heart, and that strict poverty would likewise be infringed.

On one occasion that he was unable to ask the father-rector's permission to give away a little picture, the occasion seemed so pressing that he presumed upon a tacit leave to dispose of it, but scarcely had he done so than his conscience became alarmed, and however good reason he had to know that his superior approved of what he had done, he most bitterly deplored it to the end of his life; and that he might never lose the recollection of it, he made a memorandum of it in these words: "I once gave away a picture without having previously asked permission;" so great was his delicacy of conscience on this point. Two common paper prints, one pasted on the wall, and the other fixed upon his table, that it might always be before his eyes when he studied, a wooden cross blackened only with ink upon his praying-place, and a rosary of the same description suspended from his girdle, formed the catalogue of his riches, or more properly, of his devotion. He always chose the coarsest sort of paper for his writings, and was careful to leave as small a margin as he possibly could, and to write in small characters; for he considered these little

observances (which certain strong minds may call absurd) as duties very dear and precious to souls penetrated with the love of Jesus Christ and of His holy poverty. His love of poverty increased daily, from the desire he had to imitate in all respects St. Aloysius Gonzaga. It was this spirit that induced him to say, (after a visit to Cardinal Bellarmine, when asked what he would have done if his Eminence had offered him a present,) "I should not have accepted it, and I am sure that this religious prelate would not have been displeased." This remark of Berchmans' was afterwards related to the cardinal, who quite approved of it, adding, "It is just as Blessed Aloysius would have answered and acted." Like this young saint, Berchmans always sought the most humble offices; he was ingenious in contriving how they might fall to his share. To help in the kitchen, wash the dishes, and sweep the house, were the occupations most desired by his ambition. Being sent with some other students to Frescati, to assist in the offices of Holy Week, he arrived the first, and immediately took up a broom to sweep and clean the house, that all might be neat and ready for his companions on their arrival. They had been overtaken by a storm, and in consequence did not reach Frescati till late; they were quite wet

and covered with mud. Berchmans exerted himself to relieve their pitiful condition by every means he could devise: he secretly carried away their shoes, and having dried and cleaned them he conveyed them to their chambers ready for the morning. His dear brothers noticing this office of charity, concluded immediately that it was a holy contrivance of Berchmans; they taxed him with it with a friendly reproach, which he received in silence and with a smile, leaving them as much edified by his humility as by his charity. The practice of these two virtues may be said to have been the delight of his heart; and as serving in the refectory gave him the opportunity of exercising both, he had a great devotion to this duty: besides the two days every week which fell to his share, he contrived by pious ingenuity to secure two others, so that by some means or other, scarcely a day passed without his serving at table, and then nothing escaped his vigilance; his strict modesty did not prevent him from serving and providing for all. There was no one who was not pleased with the manner he discharged this duty, the father-rector more so than any one; nevertheless, thinking that he was burthened with it too often, he desired him to be content with serving when his day came. Berchmans, still more submissive than fervent,



or to speak more correctly, judging that there could be no true fervor without submission, received the order without reply, and fulfilled it with his usual exactness. There was no action, however holy, which he would not abandon for the sake of obedience. Amongst numerous proofs of this religious spirit, one was continually observed and admired, though trifling in itself. When he had finished serving, he generally paid a little visit to the Blessed Sacrament, between the first and second table; it frequently happened that he was scarcely upon his knees than the bell rang for the second table; he arose immediately, preferring the accomplishment of the Divine will, intimated by the sound of the bell, to the satisfaction he would have had in sweet communication with his Saviour. Under any other consideration, quitting the church for the refectory would have given him great pain; indeed, nothing could make eating and drinking supportable to him but obedience, and the opportunity it gave him of mortifying himself.

Besides this abstemious diet, which has been already noticed, he had many other pious penitential practices; particularly prostrating to kiss the feet of his brethren, which he always did with evident consolation of soul. No one could see him in this pious exercise without emotion;

he was not content to kiss their feet, he pressed them to his lips, and seemed as if he wished to imprint his heart upon them. Father Cepari, the rector, declares this of him, adding, that he could not cause him a greater joy than to appoint him to the most humiliating offices. It was a great pleasure to our fervent young Jesuit to collect the fragments left upon the dinner-tables, and distribute them amongst the poor: the cheerfulness with which he executed these and similar commissions, appeared even upon his countenance.

To clean and arrange the lamps was the occupation he coveted, on account of its many inconveniences: it was doubly precious to him, because Blessed Aloysius had previously exercised it in the same house and in the same circumstances, with great edification to all. Berchmans, who made it a pious duty to walk in the footsteps of his youthful patron, procured this office (like him) through his own earnest entreaties, and discharged it with the same exactitude. We may add by way of remark, that it was no easy employment in the Roman College, where the lamps were so numerous, to keep them clean and well furnished; to light them and extinguish them, especially in the depth of winter, required a great deal of time and care. He never failed in the least point of so unpleasant

a duty, arranging them daily, even those which were only used for diversion in the country. Early in the morning he did part of them before he began his studies; and in the evening he made his rounds, in order to complete what he had before been obliged to leave unfinished. Never had been seen better order or more cleanliness in an office where it is so difficult to preserve either. The superior wished to take it from him, perceiving his hands swollen, and his fingers frozen by the cold of winter, which though of shorter duration in Rome, is not less severe there than elsewhere; but Berchemans was so urgent in his solicitations to continue it, that the superior could not persist in depriving him of this opportunity of suffering for Jesus Christ. The frost that year was so intense that his face was parched, and in a manner excoriated by it. "What have you been doing to yourself, my dear brother?" said one of the older fathers, who met him in this pitiable condition, and supposed he had done it for mortification. "Pardon me, Reverend Father," answered the disciple of a crucified Jesus, "I have done nothing to put myself in this state, but even if I had, I am sure your Reverence would not be displeased that I should bear some marks of the mortification of our Divine Master." Still more profoundly engraven in his heart were

the sentiments of deep humility, which the same Divine Lord taught him so affectionately to love. Founded upon the principle of which we have already spoken, that he had been received into the society from pure charity, he felt bound to conduct himself as a servant to them all: he always looked upon them as his masters, and this humble idea, which was never effaced from his mind, nourished in him an utter contempt and disregard of self, with the highest esteem and respect for all his brothers. His upright mind recoiled at the least symptom of flattery, which generally wounds truth in the person who offers it, and humility in the person who receives it. When any of his companions were particularly successful in their public dissertations, he did not load them with complimentary congratulations, especially in the presence of others, and his reasons for it were, that he must either praise all, or be silent with respect to some. "Now," said he, "to praise all, exposes me to the danger of falsehood; to praise but a few, may be painful to the rest; silence shelters me from both these inconveniences." Moreover his caution did not lead him into the opposite extreme, so much the more dangerous, as being liable to destroy the best feelings of charity. We allude to those criticising, self-sufficient minds, who think

nothing good but what they do themselves. No one imputed anything of this spirit to the reserve of Berchmans; it was too well understood, and was besides, accompanied by a smile and look of such sincere approbation and pleasure, that though his tongue was silent, everything in him seemed to speak and declare the satisfaction he felt at the success of these dear brothers: his prudent conduct in their regard was ever animated and ruled by the most perfect charity.

It remains for us now to observe his conduct towards God, and his constant spirit of devotion, which led him to the most exact accomplishment of all the duties of his holy state. Devotion is nothing else than a fixed purpose of soul, which carries her with promptitude to accomplish all that God requires, and more particularly all that relates more immediately to His own divine service. It is frequently confounded with a certain spiritual tenderness sometimes experienced in spiritual duties. Berchmans carefully distinguished devotion from sensibility, and was quite content to love God without seeking to enjoy the sweetness of His love. A Jesuit did not appear to him deserving of pity, merely because he was deprived of sensible devotion; but truly deplorable is he who possesses not true devotion. "It is the soul of a

member of the society," said he with great animation; "without it, vain will be all his studies, preachings, and labors: never will he do anything worthy of God, but with it he will do wonders, even though his talents should not surpass mediocrity." Penetrated with these sentiments, he earnestly begged it of Almighty God, neglecting nothing on his part that could enable him to acquire it. He labored particularly in his spiritual exercises, to enkindle this sacred fire, nourishing its flame by holy thoughts, and fortifying it by the practice of severe penitential austerities. He regularly took the discipline three or four times a week even unto blood. In addition to a kind of fast prescribed by the rule on all Fridays, he fasted upon Saturdays also in honor of his dear Mother, our Blessed Lady, and wore a very rough hair-shirt. Had it depended upon him, he would have gone much further in this respect, but his superiors, having more consideration for the weakness of his constitution than for the fervor of his soul, obliged him to moderate his austerities; judging moreover, that his manner of life, which was one continued recollection joined to an incessant application, was of itself a severe mortification, more likely to reduce and debilitate him than any penances. To supply the deficiency of these, of which he had so

ardent a thirst, he was careful to lose none of those which Providence placed in his way, esteeming them as highly as he would if some precious relics of the holy cross had been presented to him; differing widely from those who pursue the mortifications which are forbidden them, and neglect such as are prescribed them, showing clearly by the irregularity of their conduct, that they seek less to mortify their self-will than to indulge it in their mortifications. Berchmans' vigilance was incessant, that he might let slip no opportunity of curbing and destroying his own will; and what self-love does in imperfect souls by making them seek their own pleasure and comfort, divine love did in him by inducing him to do everything that was contrary to his own inclination. He was ingenious in the art of self-tormenting, or at least of depriving himself of natural conveniences. Whether he was seated to read, or kneeling to pray, he never supported himself either upon his table or oratory; he considered that his lecture would have been less meritorious, and his prayer less respectful, if he had sought in either a comfortable position. Whenever he was spared on one point, he took care to make up for it some other way. The weakness of his chest did not allow him to read at table in the large refectory of the Roman Col

lege. He looked upon this indulgence on the part of his superiors as a great loss to him; to compensate him in some manner for it, he obtained their permission to go and read to the sick in the infirmaries at certain hours of the day; this was to him a sweet recreation, nor did he ever desire any other.

The half hour which is allowed at the end of recreation to those who have been employed in serving at table, or in washing dishes, was always devoted by Berchmans to this spiritual reading. When at Frescati, during the long vacations, he gave an hour at least to it; for the diversions would have been tedious to him, if he had not divided his time between the amusements of his companions, and his much more delightful entertainments with God. When in the country he formed a kind of spiritual desert in his interior, out of which obedience called him from time to time to recreate himself with his dear brothers, but to which he retired again as soon as possible, to enjoy in silence his sweet intercourse with his heavenly Father. It was thus he sanctified his recreation days, in which piety had far the greater share. Careful as he was to spend them in devotion, they seemed to him too distracting and dissipating to allow of his approaching the Author of Grace by holy communion; and however



ardent. His desires might be, he did not think that he could bring to it that recollection of mind which so holy an action deserves, particularly as he had not the entire morning at his own disposal to consecrate to it. When it happened (as it occasionally did) that his devotion could be gratified on this point, his admiring companions were careful to do nothing that could disturb his calm serenity of soul, leaving him full liberty to enjoy the delights of his Heavenly Guest, contenting themselves with the share he gave them in his fervent prayer; they did the same for him on similar occasions, and in this charitable alliance, which St. Basil terms a commerce of piety, he begged they would obtain for him of our Lord grace to advance in the science of the saints, and to grow strong in health and in doctrine, if it were to the greater glory of God. He made this distinction between the first of these favors and the two last, that he absolutely desired and sought the former; and the others, only on condition that he should make a holy use of them, devoting them to the good of souls and the glory of his Creator; which proves how near and dear to his heart were the interests of Almighty God.

Dead to everything else, he led, according to the maxim of St. Paul, a life hidden in God with

Jesus Christ, being interiorly occupied with His divine mysteries, and ever disposed to contemplate His sovereign greatness. Not that the humble young man affected any extraordinary methods of prayer, for esteeming himself unworthy of the lowest rank before God, he held himself profoundly annihilated at the foot of the throne of this Sovereign Majesty. Like a true son of St. Ignatius, he diligently studied the manner of prayer, of which this great master of spiritual life has traced such excellent rules, observing even the least of them with most scrupulous fidelity; in fact, his exactitude could not possibly be greater, and in recompense our Lord raised him to a most sublime degree of prayer. Every night he prepared his meditation for the following morning, arranging the points and the principal affections to be excited; he repassed all this in his memory just before he fell asleep, and recalled them to mind the moment he woke. As soon as he arose, he fell upon his knees to offer homage and thanksgiving to his Creator. This first action of the day was performed prostrate before that poor cross which has been already mentioned in alluding to his love of poverty; he kissed it with tender devotion, and amorously adored this God of goodness, to whose passion he was so sensibly devoted. His love

was testified by inflamed sighs, which burst from his heart as soon as his companions had left the room. Surprised in these transports of devotion by one of them who had remained in the room unperceived by Berchmans, he was confounded that any other than Almighty God should have witnessed his emotion, and resolved in future to be so careful and watchful, that nothing should exteriorly appear to indicate those favors which our Divine Lord was pleased to operate in his soul. However, notwithstanding all his vigilance, there were moments when he was no longer master of himself; and then praying in the company of others, he could not conceal the sacred fire which inflamed him; he could neither suppress his sighs, nor certain ardent expressions of love, which, in spite of himself, betrayed the secret of his heart. These exterior marks of his vehement love, far from troubling those who were praying with him, served to recall them to most profound recollection; and, as if the charity of their holy brother had become common to all, they owned that however cold or tepid they had previously felt, they then became animated by an extraordinary fervor, and penetrated with a holy unction most consoling to them. At the conclusion of his prayer (which he could with difficulty force himself to quit) he arose, and repeatedly kissed

a picture of our Blessed Lady holding the Divine Infant in her arms, intending to show by this action the desire he had to leave his heart at the sacred feet of Jesus and Mary. It is not surprising that he was thus affectionately devoted to them; he received from them an abundance of graces and consolations, which seemed to increase as the end of his life drew nigh; for about eight months before his death (on Saturday, the 18th of December, 1620), it was, as he himself acknowledged, like a flood of peace, the most delicious peace, which our Lord infused into his soul; the sweet effects of it were perceived by all who had the happiness of conversing with him; and they unanimously declared that the words of the servant of God, at this period of his life, impressed on their hearts sentiments of most tender devotion.

Although these feelings of consolation and sweet sensibility of soul were very frequent at this time, their current did not flow so uniformly, but that the spring seemed occasionally to be dried up. From time to time he suffered the most distressing aridity of soul, which obliged him to exclaim with holy David, "Restore to me, O Lord, the joy of Thy Holy Spirit;" and "Let a ray of Thy light shine on my soul, and the cloud shall be dissipated." He endured these bitter privations with most

perfect resignation, and however painful they might be to him, his fervor, like his submission, was uniform and constant. Faithful to God under these trials, he advanced as rapidly in the way of perfection when Providence planted thorns in his path, as he did when it was strewn with flowers; and notwithstanding the obscurity caused in his soul by the absence of the Sun of Justice, the same calm repose reigned there as if it were illumined by the brilliant rays of joy. Moreover this obscurity was seldom of long duration: a soul so pure would soon discern its God amidst the thickest gloom, and this generally occurred during the days of his retreat, more especially in the retreat made by the students at the termination of the scholastic year; and then the Holy Ghost finding him totally disengaged from every other study but the science of the saints, communicated Himself to him with such a profusion of graces, and so enlightened his mind, that He seemed almost to open heaven to him, and submit to his view the Eternal Truth divested of all shade or cloud, and encompassed by majesty and beauty. During these seasons of spiritual abundance he provided himself (according to his own remark) with all that could be necessary against a day of sterility; so that nothing should be wanting to him during the whole ensuing year,

owing to the gracious liberality of our Divine Lord. One thing that helped materially to sustain his devotion, was his frequent practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament. We have already remarked, that, like a faithful courtier, he was assiduous in rendering homage to his heavenly King: his ordinary custom was to visit Him six or seven times a day at least, besides the extraordinary visits from time to time when he found more leisure, especially during any public diversions, from which this tender favorite of our Lord would steal away, to go in secret and spiritually recreate himself with the beloved Friend of his soul. The most delicious pleasure to him in this world was found at the eucharistic table; and his most ardent desire was to approach it frequently. This heavenly manna created in his soul an appetite that was ever on the increase, and produced effects which were evident to all. The same happened to him with regard to this spiritual nourishment, that the corporal appetite experiences when left too long without support: in proportion as the day of one communion passed, he longed for the arrival of the next; and when a festival happened to fall upon a Sunday, he would say to his companions with a deep sigh, "Ah, my brothers, what a loss for us! we shall now be deprived of a communion;" and unless some feast occurred in the week, he

always implored leave to make an extra communion, in order to supply the deficiency. His superior never refused him this satisfaction, being too glad to assist his devotion by all possible means. Whilst enjoying the presence of his Saviour, he was so penetrated therewith, that he could with difficulty be roused to a sense of what was passing around; nor could he, without effort, be drawn from the spot where he knelt to make his thanksgiving. His feelings were much the same when, after spending some time in the church, he was obliged to quit it: his companion usually found it necessary to shake him several times, to arouse him from this sort of mystic slumber, which entranced him and suspended every other thought and feeling which was not connected with the loved Spouse of his soul. It would be impossible that Berchmans, so filled with the love of Jesus, should not most tenderly love His holy Mother. His devotion to her had been imbibed in early infancy; even then he consecrated himself entirely to her service. That he might have more liberty to make her the ordinary subject of his conversation, he made open profession of belonging to her. "Yes, I am wholly her's," would he say with most lively affection, "and I will remain her's to the last breath of life:" then amorously addressing himself to this august

Queen, he added, " You are my dearest patroness; the patroness of my soul, of my studies, of my salvation, and of my perfection. I depend in all things on your maternal goodness, and here will I repose with the confidence of a child." He addressed himself to her at the beginning of every action; and as he considered recreation to be one of the most dangerous duties, he always went to her altar to recommend it to her particular care. One day that he was led off by three or four of his companions, who were eager to secure the pleasure of conversing with him, he forgot this little preparatory visit for some minutes; but no sooner did he recollect himself than, interrupting the discourse, he begged their permission to go and pay his accustomed respects to his dear mother. To this they willingly assented. and on his return, after satisfying his devotion, he took the opportunity of speaking highly in her honor. He made it a rule to say the rosary in the chapel dedicated to her, as well as other prayers, which he called the flowers destined for a spiritual bouquet, to be presented to her on her festivals. He compared his beads to a happy chain, which bound him to the Queen of Angels; he wore it fastened to his girdle during the day, and round his arm in the night, though for the last year of his life he wore it round his neck.



About this time he thought of a devotion which delighted Cardinal Bellarmine. This zealous servant of Mary, always ardent in honoring the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, was not content with believing it from the bottom of his heart, (not doubting for a moment but that God had thus pre-eminently distinguished her,) but he made an express vow, that if he were ever capable of writing a work fit for publication, that should be the subject of it; and until his capacity should be equal to this, he promised to defend the truth of it by all the means in his power. It was in the following terms that he made this engagement, which was found in his own hand-writing amongst his papers after his decease: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, in the presence of your dear Son, whom I believe to be truly present in the most holy Sacrament of the altar, I promise to Him and to you that I will ever believe and defend, to the end of my life, the truth of your Immaculate Conception. Accept this promise from John Berchmans, most unworthy son of the Society of Jesus." The paper containing this promise was placed by Berchmans in the hand of an image of our Blessed Lady. When this circumstance was related to the learned and pious cardinal, he exclaimed with great emotion, "O dear child of Mary! O precious engage-

ment, worthy of the mother and of the Son! She only can have inspired him with this noble design. No doubt she desired that this saintly young man should join his testimony to that which so many illustrious persons have given of her Immaculate Conception."

Berchmans lost no opportunity of honoring his holy mother. When he went to Frescati, to enjoy the benefit of country air with his fellow-students, he seemed only to be there that he might spend the time in a solemn octave dedicated to her honor, and to engrave the love of her more deeply in the hearts of his dear brothers. As soon as they were out of Rome, and had finished the Itinerary, he always recited the office of our Blessed Lady; and the praises which he there found, drawn from scripture and from the Fathers, furnished ample subject of entertainment for these her zealous servants, who were never weary of discoursing upon the excellences and grandeur of their divine Mistress. Berchmans was never at a loss upon this cherished theme, so that when the memory of others seemed exhausted, love kept his perpetually replenished; so that it was frequently remarked of him, that he seemed to have read everything, and to have forgotten nothing, that related to the honor and praise of the Mother of God. The church dedicated to her at Grotta

**F**errata was the usual term of his walk. He held this place in singular veneration; first, because our Blessed Lady is especially honored there; and secondly, because it was miraculously built by St. Nilus, assisted by his companion, St. Bartholomew: on this account both these saints are honored in the Farnesian chapel. We need not detail a thousand other practices of devotion, of which he acquitted himself with most constant fidelity, particularly upon Saturday, which was very dear to him, because consecrated to the Queen of Angels: moreover he had been born on that day, was received into the society on it, and, as it afterwards happened, he was buried on a Saturday. Several times in the day he recited this sentence, "I desire and resolve to love Mary, and will never rest until I obtain from our Lord a tender love of His most holy mother." Whenever he had any particularly important favor to beg of her, he used to write it upon paper, together with a promise to recite certain prayers, or perform some mortification in her honor: then he fastened this paper to an image of her, and thus recommended the success of his affair. The Mother of God seemed pleased with the confidence and simplicity of heart of this her favorite child, and generally granted what was so filially asked of her.

He was not content with loving her only. He revered all who were connected with her. St. Ann, her blessed mother, and St. Joseph, her holy spouse, were of this number, particularly the latter; not only as being head of the holy family, and as such foster-father and guardian of the Incarnate Word, but more especially because he considered him the perfect model of a hidden life, and this had great charms for our holy Berchmans. So devoted was he to this privileged patriarch, that he collected in writing whatever he met with in books relating to the singular favors conferred upon him by Heaven, and also the numerous miracles which had been wrought through his intercession. He declared that from the time he had chosen him to be his advocate, he had never asked anything in his name without obtaining it. His devotion towards his angel guardian was not less tender and confiding. St. John the Evangelist was one of his favorite patrons; he honored St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier as the fathers of his soul, whilst he loved St. Stanislaus and St. Aloysius as his most dear and holy brothers. His affection for the latter was strengthened by a feeling of gratitude, for he considered himself indebted to St. Aloysius for the grace of his vocation in consequence of having read his Life, and he was persuaded

that it could be only by the imitation of his virtues and by the power of his intercession that he himself could hope to attain to sanctity. He repaired very frequently to the little chapel where the relics of this saint were deposited, and there most earnestly begged to be animated by the same spirit of fervor and devotion. The praises of this young saint were ever in his mouth, and the desire of imitating him was ever in his heart. In this he succeeded so perfectly, that St. Aloysius never had a more faithful copy than John Berchmans. This opinion of him was universal in Rome, especially amongst the Jesuits, who had had the opportunity of knowing both St. Aloysius and Berchmans. In fact, one of our most distinguished fathers openly expressed as much on the celebrated occasion of translating the body of the former; for accompanying the solemn procession then made, Father Theodore Buseus, seeing Berchmans pass along, made this remark: "Behold the living image of Aloysius Gonzaga!" A few months after this solemnity Berchmans entered upon the last year of his life. Like those which had preceded it, he spent it in the exercise of all virtues, especially of charity, which he considered the chief of all, and the one which was to crown all the rest. He could speak of nothing but of charity; he made it the

subject of his particular examen. Amongst all his writings of that period, scarcely a page occurs without these two words, "Charity, charity." Such was the disposition of mind of this servant of God, when Divine Providence was pleased to withdraw him from this world, where he had been left sufficiently long to serve as a model to young persons of his age and state. We have seen in the two first books of this history, what the novices and students of the society should do to live well, it remains to show in the next what both must do in order to die well.

## BOOK III.

With respect to death, how different are the dispositions of the just and those of sinners! It deprives the latter of the goods of this life, without promising them the blessings of the next. Even when contemplated at a distance it occasions regret, but as it approaches they are seized with alarm, which often degenerates into despair. The saints, on the contrary, expect it with tranquillity and receive it with joy, because it is the beginning of their felicity and the end of their sorrows. With this impression, St. Bernard, tracing the portrait of a faithful soul, concludes with this remark: "He lives with patience. He dies with pleasure." Patience sustains him during life, which separating him as it does from the God whom he loves, cannot be otherwise than distasteful to him. Death overwhelms him with joy, because it unites him to the Object of his happiness, and secures him the possession of it for ever. This portrait of the just man was never more literally verified than in our holy young Jesuit. It is certain he was attached to nothing in this


world, his treasure truly was in heaven ; therefore, life was more painful to him than death. Nevertheless, however great his motives might be for desiring death rather than life, he expected the former and supported the latter with an equal tranquillity of soul ; willing to remain and willing to depart, as it might please Almighty God, whose will regulated all his desires. This was the true state of his soul, as he acknowledged to one of our most spiritual fathers, to whom he was in the habit of speaking without reserve. - "You are young," said this father to him," and according to human appearances, you have many years of life before you ; but if it should please God to abridge their course, and send you an early summons, what would you say?" "I should say that God showed me great goodness," replied Berchmans, "in thus shortening the term of my exile, by calling me to my true country." "What!" said one of his companions, who, though nearly of his own age, was by no means as indifferent upon the subject, "what, would you be content to die so young?" "What matters it," replied Berchmans, "whether we die young or old, provided that by dying we perform the will of God? In fact, my dear brother, would it not be a great happiness for us to be removed from a world where we are



constantly in danger of offending the God whom we love, and to be placed in the happy home where we shall be certain of never displeasing Him?" "What you say is all very good," observed his faithful friend; "the advantage of dying young is very evident, I allow, but to enjoy this consolation, we must have deserved it by a very fervent life, and who can flatter himself of this?" "No one," answered the servant of God. "We must on our part labor with courage, and then expect all from God, who is good and faithful. His grace supports us, and His mercy crowns us. I confide in the first to live well, and in the latter to die well." His companion wishing to press him still further upon the subject, remarked, "Now if it were necessary to undertake the voyage of eternity immediately, should you be willing to do so?" "Truly," answered Berchmans; "if the choice depended upon myself, I should be glad to make the spiritual exercises by way of preparation; but if our Lord decided otherwise, I am quite ready to do His will; and if at this moment that I speak to you, He should demand my soul, I could surrender it very willingly into His divine hands." These were the sentiments of the follower of "the Lamb," who came into the world not to do His own, but His Father's will. A remark somewhat similar to the above was

made by him to the celebrated Father Strada, who was both touched and edified by it. This Jesuit (so well known for his History of the Flemish War) being in Rome, chose our young Fleming for his companion when visiting the church of St. Mary Major, and perceiving that the thought of death occupied the mind of his young associate, he took the opportunity of noticing the great happiness of religious, the greater number of whom die with tranquillity and content; "And to speak of those of the society," said Father Strada, "I have seen many among them die in sentiments of most sweet and holy confidence. Ah, may I, like them, die the death of the just!" "You have a right, my dear Reverend Father," immediately rejoined Berchmans, "to desire the death of the just, having led the life of one for so many years; as for myself, who have not this advantage, I must begin by desiring to live the life of the just, that I may be able later to hope to die like them." Strada received this answer as a caution sent him from Heaven; and through these expressions, so honorable to himself, and at the same time humiliating to Berchmans, he discerned a solid truth, which struck his mind and remained for ever engraven there. He admired the innocence and candor of the person employed by Divine Providence to inspire him

with sentiments of a more elevated sanctity; and afterwards effects proved that Berchmans had not spoken as a man of this world. In truth, his body only belonged to it; his heart was already with his desires; and all his desires were in heaven with Jesus Christ, the only love of his soul; with St. Paul, he passionately desired to be united with Jesus, so that we may say, he languished rather than lived here below. Our Lord had compassion upon the state of violence to which these holy transports reduced him. He heard his desires, and distinctly intimated to him that He designed shortly to call him to Himself. This occurred on the last day of July, on which is celebrated the feast of St. Ignatius, founder of the society. In the distribution of suffrages for the ensuing month, this sentence fell to Berchmans' share, "Watch and pray, for ye know not the hour when the Lord will come." These words, taken from the third chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, struck him most forcibly, and seemed to him to be a warning from the Holy Ghost that his end was approaching. He proceeded immediately to Father Francis Piccolomini, his dear master, to communicate the happy news to him, and he also mentioned it to his companions, so that it was soon spread through the Roman College, and caused many different impressions. Some



looked upon the assertion of the holy young man less as a prediction than as the expression of his desires; others feared it would prove to be too true.

A short time sufficed to convince all of its reality, for scarcely had five days elapsed, before he fell ill on the day dedicated to the feast of our Lady ad Nives; so that the first notice of his death seems to have been given by his holy father St. Ignatius; and the second, by our Blessed Lady, his incomparable mother. His malady began by diarrhœa, which he neglected, as he generally did all his indispositions. So little did he apprehend the consequences, that he accompanied his associates to the country-house, as usual, it being a recreation day. The pleasure he felt in sharing their spiritual entertainments made him almost forget his indisposition; and all idea of it seemed banished, when after dinner he joined Father Octavius Lorenzini, to whose wonderful piety was added an intimate acquaintance with the history of the society. The hour they spent together seemed scarcely longer than a moment to Berchmans, who had been delighted by hearing this learned father describe the birth and progress of the society, with the lives of the first Jesuits who so much honored it, and the zeal of those fervent missionaries who had already carried the

name of Jesus to the extremities of the world. All that he heard from this father, distinguished for talent and sanctity, filled with him joy, and shed over his soul a holy unction, which continued throughout that whole day. On the morrow he was desired to go with a young man of his own age, and be present at the disputations in philosophy which were held in the Greek College. A certain doctor, who had been invited to open the session, having been from some cause or other hindered from attending, Berchmans was so urgently pressed to supply his place, that, notwithstanding his reiterated excuses, the unanimous voice of the assembly overpowered his modest diffidence, and obliged him to open the argument, which he did with so much grace, dignity, and modesty, that the audience, charmed with seeing and hearing him, suffered him to continue speaking a whole hour without interruption. There can be no doubt but this exertion must have contributed to overheat his blood, however great his moderation in speaking may have been. Moreover, in order to reach the scene of discussion in time, he was obliged to take a long walk during the greatest heat of the day; at all events, the following night was a painful one; a fever, added to his previous malady, allowed him no repose; nevertheless, his courage led him to rise at the or-

dinary hour; he discharged all his duties, and passed the morning without speaking of his sufferings; he feared to lose the merit of them if disclosed before necessity compelled it, and as yet that necessity did not appear sufficiently pressing. It is the practice of the true servants of a crucified Jesus, to conceal their crosses as much as they can, lest the relief and compassion caused by their exposure, should deprive them of the honor and pleasure of enduring them. It was in vain that our fervent invalid, (in conformity with these heroic sentiments,) struggled against nature; his illness became so evident, that he could no longer conceal it, fearing, I will not say the risk of life, which he cared very little to preserve, but a failing in obedience, which was far more precious to him than life, the rule requiring that when the Jesuits feel their health notably impaired, they give information of it to proper authority. This consideration induced Berchmans about mid-day to seek the father-rector, and frankly acknowledge his indisposition. There was no need of his speaking for this purpose; the superior saw it immediately in his pale and worn countenance, and desired him to go without delay to the infirmary. The true son of obedience offered no reply, and making a profound reverence, went straight from his supe-

rior to the infirmary, without so much as going to his own room. Having informed the infirmarian of his malady in as few words as possible, and being desired to go to bed, he immediately complied, offering the sacrifice of his life, if Almighty God should so ordain it. We enter thus minutely into the details of a malady which deprived us of this holy religious, with the idea, that if any of the circumstances were omitted the portrait offered to the imitation of the youth of the society would be incomplete; and Berchmans was as perfect a model in sickness as he had been in health.

It was on a Saturday afternoon that Berchmans took to his bed, in a profound calm of mind, caused by his entire resignation to the divine will: he expressed this to the infirmarian, who said to him as soon as he entered the infirmary, "Well, brother Berchmans, what are we to do with you?" "You will do just what you please," answered he; "and as for me, I hope to do what our Lord pleases; I am in his hands, and yours; ready to obey Him, and to obey you as representing Him."

He expressed himself in the same terms to his master, of whom we have already spoken. He was better skilled in the philosophy of Jesus Christ, than in that of Aristotle, though he had a particular talent of inspiring the former

whilst he taught the latter. Berchmans had been fortunate in falling under his care when he left the noviciate; the two were strictly united by the Holy Ghost in the sacred bands of religious friendship. "You see, I was not mistaken, my dear father," exclaimed Berchmans, "when I told you that Providence had its own design in sending my suffrage a few days ago: it was not in vain that it cautioned me to watch and pray, in expectation of our Lord's coming." Piccolomini felt his heart pierced by these words, and could only say in reply, that he would go and beg Almighty God to cure him. His pupil, however, only prayed for the accomplishment of the divine will, which thought occupied him the whole night, during which he never closed his eyes to sleep. He was confirmed in this holy state of abandonment by the grace of communion, which the father-rector, who visited him in the morning, could not refuse to his devotion; but he would not allow him to rise and prostrate himself upon the ground, as he wished to do, in order to receive our Lord with more respect, though he was permitted to kneel upon his bed. He remained in this posture, filled with the most humble confusion at receiving with so little respect, as he thought, so great a Guest: he endeavored to repair this exterior irreverence, by



annihilating himself in most profound interior homage.

After this holy action his deep recollection of mind continued uninterrupted until the arrival of the physician, who pronounced him to be somewhat better; so that the fever either was diminished, or that the presence of the heavenly Physician had suspended its violence. He remained tranquil throughout the day, during which the infirmary was never without some faithful friends, who anxiously came to offer their services to the dear invalid. He acknowledged and returned their friendship with many assurances of lively gratitude; but he was far more anxious to cause them no pain, than he was to relieve his own. He looked upon the effects of sickness, and the remedies to be employed, as so many happy necessities of mortifying self. He took the most bitter draughts, as so many precious drops from the chalice of our Lord, without ever showing the least reluctance. Once when a very nauseous medicine was presented to him, he begged a father who was present to bless it; and when he had swallowed it, he desired the father to say the grace after meals, as if he had just finished a pleasant repast.

His remedies were useful only to his soul; the body was by no means relieved by them:

his fever returned, and he determined to confide in spiritual remedies. On the eve of St. Lawrence he asked the infirmarian if he might hope for communion on the next day; and being answered, that it was not usual in the college to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick excepting upon Sunday, without great necessity, but that he could easily obtain that permission for him if he asked it; "No, no," immediately replied the humble Berchmans, "I am unworthy of any particular privilege; it is too much for me to share in such as are common; I desire no others." This answer edified all who heard it; and whilst it increased the esteem in which he was already held, it redoubled their dread and unwillingness to lose him. Up to this time their apprehensions had been but light, because his illness did not appear to be of a serious nature; but on the following Tuesday alarm was excited by the extreme debility to which he was reduced, and which required the frequent help of stimulating cordials to prevent him from fainting away. On the evening of that day, when every one excepting the rector had left the infirmary, he, perceiving that danger of death was threatening, like a good father, spoke thus to Berchmans: "If it should please our Lord to call you to Himself, my dear brother, have you any dread, or is there anything that troubles

you, that you could wish to settle before you quit this world?" "Nothing whatever," replied Berchmans, with most holy confidence; "I have to deal with too good a God to be afraid of appearing in His sight; yet, if anything at this moment were capable of causing me uneasiness, it is the fear lest the Flemish province of the society, seeing both my companion and myself die thus early, might be unwilling to send any more young Jesuits here; so that on this account the international communication, so well calculated to unite the different parts of the society, might be interrupted in consequence of my death. But the God of charity, who animates this great body, and who unites all its members in Jesus Christ, knows well what He does; He is the Master, and I am His most humble servant, devoted only to His will. If He desires my death, I am here, quite ready, for such also is my desire; and if the decision of my destiny depended upon myself, I should not hesitate a single moment." His superior was exceedingly consoled at finding him in such holy dispositions; but at the same time he was inexpressibly grieved by the thought, that the college was so soon to lose such a perfect model of perfection. His increasing weakness made the superior fear that something sudden might occur; he therefore ordered the infirmarian to keep watch

by his bed-side, and observe any change that should take place.

John Baptist Ballerati, the infirmarian, was a very skilful man; but his indefatigable charity and unalterable meekness (both of which exceeded even his ability) made him particularly well suited to his office. Perceiving that his dear invalid had little or no chance of sleep, he did his best to entertain him with discourses upon heaven; and his debility still increasing, he said, "I find you very weak, my dear brother, should you not like to fortify yourself by holy communion to-morrow?" "By way of viaticum?" observed Berchmans. "I mean it in that sense," replied Ballerati; "for it seems to me you are soon to undertake the grand voyage." At these words Berchmans' strength seemed to be restored; and throwing himself on the breast of the infirmarian, he exclaimed, "O happy, O delightful news! my dear brother; the sweetest and most consoling I have ever had!" Poor Ballerati was so much affected, that he could only answer by his tears. "Why do you weep?" continued Berchmans. "You love me; and do you regret my happiness?" Then taking the crucifix in his hands, he said, with a look of tender devotion and lively confidence, "O my God, Thou knowest I have loved nothing, desired nothing, possessed nothing in

this world, but Thee: and thanks to Thy infinite mercy, at this moment I only love and desire to possess Thee. To Thee only I have recourse; in Thee I place all my confidence. O Thou God of my heart, my merciful Jesus, forsake me not." Whilst he was making this amorous prayer, the infirmarian was absorbed in grief, sighing and begging not to be forgotten when he should enjoy the presence of the One Supreme Master; but perceiving that this name only revived the pious efforts of the invalid already nearly exhausted, he desired him to moderate his transports, and try to take a little rest. He immediately obeyed, preferring to deprive himself of his sweet entertainment with his Saviour, than to lose the merit of obedience: therefore, instead of conversing with Jesus, he begged the infirmarian to take the trouble of writing his last wishes, which he dictated in the following terms:

"I most humbly ask pardon of my most kind and most honored Father, the Reverend Father Mutius Vittelleschi, general of the society; protesting that my heart is penetrated with grief, at having been his so unworthy son. I thank this dear society, my good Mother, for its maternal care of me, who have deserved so little. I offer my very humble thanks to the Reverend Father rector: to my masters, to the bro-

ther infirmarians, and generally, to every one of the house; from all I have received so much friendship, though I have only given trouble during the little illness it has pleased our Lord to send me. I beg the Reverend Father-rector will allow me to receive the holy viaticum on the ground, or, at least, upon a mattress: I hope this great consolation from his goodness; and also, that he will allow all the young Jesuits, my dear brothers, to be present at my last communion, that they may help me to make it well, supplying for my imperfect dispositions by the fervor of their prayers. It is my wish to embrace them all; and if he will allow one of them to do it for me, it is a favor for which I shall feel eternally grateful to him. In fine, the last request which I venture to make of him, and which will crown all the rest, is that I may die clothed in the habit of the society."

The father-rector fortunately entered the room at the very moment the infirmarian was going to carry him this memorial; having read it he immediately granted every request, and promised the dear invalid to do everything in his power that should contribute to the consolation of his soul. Berchmans proposed to make a general confession of his whole life to him; which however the father did not think

proper to allow, being well aware of his angelical purity, and the extreme exactness with which his ordinary confessions were made; he desired him, therefore, to be content with declaring his faults, in the same manner that he did every week. He did so in few words, but with extraordinary contrition; offering, as a sacrifice of obedience, the desire which he had to detail, at the moment he was about to close his life, all the faults which he had committed during it. This being done, he thought of nothing else than to dispose himself to receive the holy viaticum. All the young Jesuits were ordered to repair to the infirmary when it was to be administered to him. They were summoned to it in the morning by the brothers who had charge of awakening them at the hour of rising. From all parts of the house sighs and lamentations were heard; each one hastened to the church, where the priest had already arrived to convey the Blessed Sacrament; and everywhere might be heard these and similar exclamations: "O God, what a misfortune! What a loss to the college! O this dear brother! what a saint we lose!"

In the midst of this universal grief and consternation, caused by the approaching death of Berchmans, he alone was calm, and joyfully awaiting the coming of his Saviour, as he ac-

known to a pious and learned father, who approaching to his bedside asked him in a whisper, whether he had any trouble of conscience. "None whatever, thanks to the goodness of our Lord," answered he; "I am content; and by His grace I enjoy a peace which the whole world would be unable to give me." In compliance with his request a mattress was spread upon the floor, and he was placed upon it, clothed in that dear habit which he had so often kissed. He was in this humble and devout position, his countenance serene, his eyes raised towards heaven, and his heart inflamed with Divine love, when the father-rector brought in the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by a great number of Jesuits, all bathed in tears. No sooner did he perceive our amiable Saviour (in whom alone he placed all his hopes) than his strength seemed to revive by the ardor of his love; he arose and knelt upon his mattress; and that he might be able to maintain this posture throughout the holy ceremony, he accepted the kind offers of two of his young brothers, to support him on each side. In this state, bare-headed, his whole body bending forwards, he profoundly adored Him whom the priest held in his hands before him; and having recited the Confiteor, he added these holy protestations, in as loud a voice as he could command:



"I protest, with all my heart, that I have here present my Lord Jesus Christ, true Son of God the Father Almighty, and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, God and Man: I also protest that I will live and die a true child of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, in whose bosom I have received the inestimable grace of spiritual regeneration; and as I have the honor of belonging in this quality to the most sacred Virgin and to the Society of Jesus, I protest in the presence of my Lord and my God, who sees the sincerity of my soul, that I am resolved to have the heart and feelings of a son to the last moment of my life." He pronounced these words with a devotion that would have inspired the most obdurate, and have moved the most insensible; after which he received with the respect and love of a seraph, the adorable body of Jesus Christ, from the hands of the father-rector, whose tears fell fast as he recited the sacred words.

This angel of the earth having received the God of heaven, remained in most profound recollection with his head bowed down and his arms crossed upon his breast; being confounded at receiving in a house of clay Him who was already opening the gates of the eternal palace to him. In this sort of ecstasy, where his soul was fortified, his body became so much

weakened, that it was judged expedient not to defer extreme unction, which he wished to receive immediately. To dispose himself with more respect and modesty, he had taken the precaution the night before to have his feet washed. The rector, who had undertaken to perform the religious ceremony, was so much overcome as to be scarcely able to pronounce the prayers; the assistants penetrated with grief, could not answer. Berchmans, who had been replaced on his mattress, made the responses himself, with great piety and presence of mind, as tranquil, and considering the sacrament as attentively, as if he had not been the sick person, feeling happy in being thus fortified by the Church against the powers of darkness. Being thus purified before God of any remaining stains, he desired the satisfaction of being confounded at his faults in the sight of men; for this purpose he obtained the father-rector's permission to make a public confession, and beg pardon of his dear brothers. And as he had, in his own humble opinion often scandalized them in his life-time, he had a wish in death to say something that might perhaps edify them. Nevertheless, he distrusted his own judgment upon the point; and however holy his intention might be, he feared lest some secret pride might insinuate itself and corrupt the action; he found no

better preservation against this dangerous poison, than to disclose his idea to his superior, and blindly to submit to his decision.

The father, understanding what our Lord, and the interests of His glory, inspired Berchmans to do, and thinking it, moreover, likely to produce great spiritual profit, undertook to deliver his sentiments for him ; and speaking in a very audible and impressive tone, he informed them that their dying companion, penetrated by the many proofs of kindness they had shown him, and filled with gratitude for their friendship, wished at this last hour to give them a mark of his affection and confidence, by assuring them, that he felt at that moment filled with sensible consolation, in consequence of the inestimable grace which our Lord had granted him, of never having committed any deliberate venial sin from the time he entered the society, nor with having voluntarily violated any one of his rules, or transgressed the least order of a superior. This acknowledgment, drawn from him by a pure desire of glorifying God, and of edifying and encouraging his brothers to bear courageously the inconveniences of a pure, regular, and fervent life ; this acknowledgment, I repeat, redoubled both the esteem in which he was held, and the regret caused by his approaching death in the flower of his age. Most of the

assistants were convinced by the very circumstance of this declaration, that his end was near; being persuaded that humility, which was so dear to him, and which had kept his mouth so constantly closed, would not have opened it then to declare his favors if he had not been pretty certain that they were on the point of being veiled by the cloud of death. Hence, they concluded that this holy brother would shortly die; and by permission of the rector they all embraced him with most tender and religious friendship, each one confidently charging him with his spiritual commission for the next life, and asking of him some advice for this.

Amongst all his masters, the one who held the first place in his heart was the last to embrace him; a dread of showing too much sensibility had hitherto prevented this manifestation of tenderness. The grateful disciple, stretching out his hands to him, said, "I have well remembered you, my dear father: the note which I dictated in the night must be the faithful pledge of my sincere gratitude." Piccolomini, throwing himself upon his knees, begged pardon for not having done more to serve him. The humble Berchmans, confused at seeing his master, a priest of Jesus Christ, in such a posture, showed so much distress, that he obliged his master to

rise, promising that if he would do him that favor, he would endeavor to obtain other favors for him, if he should be so happy as to have any power in heaven. "O then, my dear brother," said Piccolomini, "ask for me a great spirit of prayer as soon as you enjoy the sight of Almighty God!" The disciple sighed for nothing more than the celestial country: he counted every moment of his exile. Expressing to this father the desire which he had to flee and be at rest, "Father-rector struggles for me, as Jacob did," said he, with a sort of prophetic sight. Nothing was more true; for at the very moment that the invalid announced this spiritual conflict of his superior with heaven, he was actually at the altar celebrating mass, and most earnestly entreating Almighty God not to deprive the house of so great an example of virtue. "However," continued Berchmans, "it is in vain; were he to redouble his prayers to obtain my cure, he would not succeed; my hour is come." This opinion was confirmed by Angelo Bagnarea, one of the most able physicians of his time, who having visited Berchmans, and seeing all the college assembled round him, anxiously waiting for his decision upon the case, thus addressed them: "The malady of this young religious is beyond the reach of our art. My fathers, Heaven re-demands this angel, which it

only lent you. I had the honor of seeing Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga in a similar state: behold here his true copy: this young man seems to have resembled him in his innocence and purity of life; no wonder then that he should be like to him in death. In real truth, I consider you happy in having so many young persons so detached from life, and so willing to die in the flower of their age; whilst in most other places, we are obliged in a manner, to drag even the oldest to the gates of death." He uttered these words with a profound sigh, much moved and edified by what he had just witnessed.

The general of the society was not less so, in the visit which he made to his dear dying son. The innocent young man, delighted at seeing his good father, told him, with most tender respect, that he had much wished to see him, that he might have the consolation of returning thanks for all his paternal care of him, to entreat of him the forgiveness of his faults, and to beg his benediction. "I have always loved you, my dear brother," said the general to him, "with great affection; from the moment of your arrival here, you found a place in my heart, where you have ever since been constantly cherished; and I had hoped, at a later period, to have given further proof of my affec-

tion. Our divine Lord, however, is going to give you much stronger proofs of His. As for my forgiveness, I must own there is no cause that can require it; but for my blessing, I give it you with all my heart:" and having made the sign of the cross over him, the father-general withdrew, exceedingly consoled at seeing one of his most cherished children dying in such holy dispositions.

There was scarcely any one in the college, or in the other houses of the society in Rome, who did not wish to be present at the consoling spectacle of his happy and edifying death; and no one left him without feeling convinced of this important truth, that the true means of dying with content is to please and love God during life.

There was a holy eagerness to watch by his bedside. Those whom the superior appointed to this duty looked upon themselves as singularly favored; and in reality the favor was sterile in regard to none of them. The exhausted patient found no repose but in his entertainments with God; these caused him no effort; he was constantly heard sighing towards the Beloved of his soul, thanking Him for the ineffable grace of his vocation; nevertheless, he always conversed very willingly with all who seemed to wish it, never losing his accus-

tomed sweetness and civility. These two virtues accompanied him even unto the end. One of his companions, who was sitting by him, perceiving his extreme and increasing weakness, gave him at frequent intervals a spoonful of liqueur which was rather of high price; this kind of profusion pained the faithful imitator of poverty, and was a cause of scruple to him. "My sickness," said he, "will cost dear to the society." By way of calming his uneasiness, he was answered that the charity of the society resembled that of a mother for her children. "Ah!" exclaimed Berchmans, "I had no need of this experience to be assured of its goodness towards me; I have had as many proofs of it as I have had the happiness of living moments amongst its members."

Another asking him whether he would like to hear a little reading, he answered, "I should be very glad of it; I could willingly listen to the chapter which relates to the death of Blessed Aloysius." It was read immediately, and when they reached that part where the historian tells us that the tediousness of his long and painful malady never provoked the slightest symptom of impatience, Berchmans, casting an amorous look upon the image of his crucified Saviour, exclaimed with a sentiment of filial fear, "My Saviour and my God, if I have unknowingly



committed any fault in this respect, I most humbly implore Thy pardon." Then hearing, a little further on, that when his approaching death was announced to St. Aloysius, he began in a transport of holy joy to sing the *Te Deum*, his faithful imitator strove to collect his little remnant of strength, and intoned it likewise, entreating the assistants to unite their voices, the better to sustain his own. He was evidently now advancing towards his end. The infirmarian, attentive to every movement or alteration, having felt his pulse, said without any fear of alarming him, "We are going, Brother Berchmans, we are going!" The saintly invalid at this good news took up his crucifix, and intertwining his rosary around it, and adding to these two the book of the rules, (which he had always so well loved,) casting his eyes tenderly upon them, he said, "These are what I hold most dear in this world, with them I am ready to die." Admirable words! which ought never to be effaced from the memory of religious persons, since they teach them that all their perfection in life, and all their consolation in death, consists in the love of Jesus crucified, in devotion to our Blessed Lady, and in the exact observance of rules. He then placed these three objects upon his breast, that he might make them, (according to the expression of

scripture,) "the buckler of his heart," which should be impenetrable to the attacks of his enemies, against whom he opposed the assistance of his heavenly protectors. Having done this, he caused to be read over to him the names of all his monthly patrons, together with the sentences of all his suffrages, which he had carefully registered, that he might always be armed with the divine word, in imitation of our Saviour, and thereby repel and confound the tempter. He was particularly pleased at having the Gradual Psalms read often to him, drawing from them great support during his illness, as he had previously found much comfort and instruction in them whilst in health. The sacred words were to him like spiritual manna, in which this true Israelite found, as it were, a most delicious flavor. To suggest to him a word only from the sacred writings, was enough to fill his soul with divine unction.

About four o'clock in the morning of Thursday, which was the eve of his death, the father-rector (who desired exceedingly not to lose him) came to visit him; and to inspire him with sentiments of confidence, recited one of the responsories in the office of St. Lawrence, which he had just been saying; it ran in these terms: "Fear nothing, my son, for I am with thee, saith the Lord; if thou passest through fire, it

flames shall not hurt thee, neither shalt thou feel it; I will deliver thee from the hands of the wicked, and from the might of thy most powerful enemies, although thou wert already in their hands." "I hope, my dear brother," continued the father, "that this promise will be accomplished in you." "I trust it will, Reverend Father; and I hope it, through the merits of our Blessed Lady," rejoined Berchmans. "Yes, my most holy mother," said he, in a very tender yet distinct voice, when he thought he was alone in the room, "you have ever been my hope, and will continue such unto the end; you will not expel me from your maternal bosom, in which I have rested throughout life, like a child." He was in these amorous colloquies, when Father De Lugo came to recommend to his prayers some very important affair, which was then requiring his attention; for, able theologian as this father was, he relied less upon his own science than upon the prayers and merits of the innocent young man.

Scarcely had he left the infirmary, than they were obliged to introduce a young nobleman of the highest distinction, who was drawn to the college by hearing of the extremity to which Berchmans was reduced. He was son of the Duke of Acquasparta, called Angelo Celci, still more illustrious for piety than for nobility

of descent. He had been the constant admirer of Berchmans' angelical modesty, no less than his extraordinary regularity: that he might be edified by both, he had often joined the young students in their recreation hours; and it was his delight to observe Berchmans (whom he called his little saint) as recollected whilst conversing with his companions, as if he were conversing with God. Nor was this young nobleman less edified at seeing such a number of young Jesuits, when the first sound of the clock announced the end of recreation, retire from their amusements, as profoundly recollected as if they had but just quitted their meditation. All this appeared so admirable, that he felt anxious to know what kind of death was reserved for young men who lived like angels. In the one he was just come to visit, he saw so sweet and tranquil an air, he heard him speak of this life with such perfect detachment, and of the next with such transports of joy, that he looked upon him more as an angel than a mortal man; and having earnestly recommended himself to his prayers, he withdrew, fully persuaded of the happiness those enjoy in death, and even before death, who renounce all things for the love of Jesus Christ.

Towards evening the physicians observed a debility more than could be accounted for by

the mere force of his fever ; but reasoning only upon their own principles, they did not think his malady beyond cure. Berchmans having listened to them some time, said, "Gentlemen, you give yourselves too much trouble ; my complaint cannot be cured ; the great Master calls me." "And where does He call you ?" asked one of them. "To heaven, Sir, to heaven," replied the dying saint. They looked upon this word as an oracle ; and unanimously agreed, that there are maladies which completely baffle the science of medicine, in which physicians and invalids must equally adore the Hand that sends them. Berchmans' malady was unquestionably of this description ; consequently they had only to abandon him to that superior Providence which ruled him.

This determination was highly satisfactory to the poor patient ; exhausted as he was by so many visits, he only desired to repose in the bosom of his Saviour, until the final moment should release him from his earthly bonds. However, he sacrificed this desire to the duty of charity ; for understanding that some Jesuits were at the infirmary door, wishing to take a last farewell of him, he begged they might be permitted to enter, one by one ; recommending to them all, (when similarity of age authorized familiar confidence,) what he himself had always

had so much at heart, viz., devotion to our Blessed Lady, love of prayer, and the exact observance of rules. To this general advice he added some more particular, and so well fitted to the disposition of each one's soul at the time, that they felt convinced he must have been inspired by Heaven; and in truth, the extraordinary effects produced by his words in the hearts of those to whom they were addressed, left no room to doubt of such being the case. Modest and reserved as he was, he spoke with a kind of authority, with which no doubt Almighty God was pleased to invest him, in order that his words might make due impression upon all hearts, and lead the hearers to receive and accomplish the divine will thus intimated to them. Animated then by this supernatural spirit, which gave him a respectful liberty, he excited the elder fathers to seek always the glory of Jesus and of His holy mother. He exhorted Father Andrew Eudemon, a very able controversialist, to continue writing upon heresies, particularly that of Calvin; deploring most bitterly the ravages occasioned by it in the most flourishing kingdom of Christendom. To Father Alexander Rocca, a German Jesuit, he said, "I beseech you to convey into your country an antidote against the venom of Lutheranism." He most earnestly entreated Father Joseph

Copponi (one of the most famous preachers of his time) to consecrate his eloquence to the defence of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady: in the like manner he urged Father John Baptist Ferrari to continue to employ his pen, as he did most admirably, in eulogizing the saints by whom God has been most honored in the society. Every body quitted him as much penetrated by his words, as if an angel immediately sent by God had spoken to them. No one, however, was so much touched by his words as a young Hungarian, whose extraordinary piety and confidence had merited his esteem. Of these two it might be said, that the grace of Jesus Christ had bound their hearts in one and the same knot; both being animated by the same zeal and sanctity. When all the rest had withdrawn, Berchmans retained this tender friend, that they might once again speak heart to heart; and embracing him affectionately, said to him, "It is now in reality, my dear brother, that I bid you a last adieu; I speak to you now for the last time in this life; I am dying, but my friendship for you will never die; as I have loved you on earth, so shall I continue to love you in heaven." The poor young man, whose heart was pierced with a most lively grief, was for sometime unable to answer excepting by his

tears; but exerting himself by a strong effort, he said to Berchmans, "Obtain for me of our Blessed Lady the graces which you judge necessary for me; particularly that I may live and die a true child of St. Ignatius." The promise being given, the dear dying saint consoled him, and gave him every hope of their being one day re-united in heavenly friendship.

Although the superior was fully persuaded of the humble dispositions of the servant of God, from the knowledge which he had of his interior, he was fearful lest the marks of esteem testified by the whole Roman College might prejudice his humility, or lessen his virtue, so necessary at this momentous passage; he fathomed his heart once more, to be satisfied on the point, and was exceedingly consoled to find therein a spirit of most perfect self-contempt, which rendered him inaccessible to vain-glory; and also a faith so lively, and a confidence so humble, as completely to arm him against the attacks of the spiritual enemy. Indeed this spiritual armor became necessary to him, according to his own prediction; for in the early part of the last night of his existence, he repeatedly told two or three of his friends, particularly his dear master, that he should have to sustain some dreadful combats. To prepare himself for them, he begged the fathers present



to recite the prayers of the Church; and although the case did not then appear urgent, they complied with his request in order to satisfy him. On reaching that part of the litanies where the holy confessors are named, he begged them to include the saints of the society. As soon as this was finished, he himself began to sing the Ave Maris Stella; and passing onwards to these tender words, "Show thyself a Mother," he made a considerable pause, in order to enjoy at leisure the sweetness of the expression. His countryman, Father Aligante, here took occasion to excite him to love our Blessed Lady, remarking, that having loved her during life, he no doubt loved her still more in death. "I dare not flatter myself," replied the humble young man, "that I have loved her well, but I have wished to do so; and I hope that her maternal goodness will condescend to love me in my present extremity." "Is it not true," continued the father, "that if you had a thousand hearts, you would consecrate them all to her love?" "Yes, indeed," answered he, "a thousand hearts would not be too much to devote to her." "She is your dear mother; you are her dear child," resumed the Jesuit; "you are now going to love each other with an eternal love."

These conversations were too holy and too

consoling not to be disturbed by the enemy of all good. It is not known of what nature the temptations were with which he assaulted the innocent young man; but their violence was very evident, from the alarm and agitation which they caused; for Berchmans, after appearing to doze for a minute or two, surprised those who were with him, by suddenly starting, with an inflamed countenance, his eyes raised towards heaven, his lips trembling, and crying out most pitiably with a loud voice, "I will not consent, no, my God, never will I offend Thee. O holy Mother, do not permit me to displease your dear Son; I prefer a thousand deaths." He repeated these words several times, always with fresh ardor. His cries were heard in the adjoining chambers; every one hastened to him, and approaching his bed, compassionated the doleful state to which Providence (ever adorable in its dispensations) abandoned this innocent victim, in order, no doubt, to purify him still more and more. All present immediately had recourse to prayer; and Berchmans, taking the crucifix in his hands, together with his beads, reliquary, and book of the rules, exclaimed, "This is my armor; with these I am secure of victory!" In effect, his alarm was suddenly dissipated; his countenance regained its usual serenity, and

he had no other feeling than of contempt for the enemy that had assaulted him. He was, however, most diligent in devoting to prayer the little remnant of his life; in order that he might secure the last graces, which he knew were to decide his eternity, he affectionately placed his rosary around his neck, as the precious mark of filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin; he read with singular tenderness the formulary of his vows, that he might renew to Jesus Christ the entire sacrifice of himself. The zealous missionary, who had the charge of public catechetical instruction, standing by his bedside, recited the Litanies; when he came to these words, "Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, pardon him," the servant of God was evidently much affected by them, begging the father to pause a little, that he might reiterate this tender sentiment. More than thirty times did he repeat, with most lively affection, "Jesus, Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, pardon me." His superior finding him in these humble and penitent dispositions, exhorted him to continue so unto the end, and again gave him the last absolution. After this Berchmans lost his speech, without however losing either his presence of mind or his constant application to Jesus crucified, whose image was continually

before his eyes. Under his inability to speak, he answered by signs to all suggested acts of piety; his looks amply supplied the place of words, and expressed his desires; for, in fact, he had no other desire than to resign his soul into the hands of Jesus Christ.

In the state to which he was reduced, his sweetest consolation was to keep his sight incessantly fixed upon the three objects of his love and hope, of which we have already spoken. That he might consider them with more facility, he placed them against his knees, which he had raised as well as he could for this purpose. The whole community, when beholding him, felt nothing of the horrors of an approaching death; all were delighted by the sight of him: the only circumstance which gave pain to some of them, was the appearance that one of his predictions would not be verified, for he had declared that he should die in the act of speaking. After four hours of trial, God vouchsafed to console them by loosening the tongue of His faithful servant, that he might be able to pronounce His holy name. He repeated several times the name of Jesus; this sweet name was like honey to his mouth, and carried calm and comfort to his heart; and now he was not disturbed by any further bitterness, notwithstanding the fresh efforts of the devil to

shake his constancy; our Lord probably so permitting this, in order to complete or embellish the crown of this holy young man. However, the solidity of his joy was in no ways moved; nor was the grace of innocence (the true foundation of his holy joy) in the least degree impaired. A sort of reflection upon the past, which should only have been consolatory to him, seemed to give him some uneasiness: it related to that young Jesuit spoken of in the second book, whose staggering vocation had been upheld and confirmed through Berchmans' intervention. We know not what the enemy of our peace may have suggested to his mind, as having been defective in this action, which had sprung from the purest motive of charity; but the trouble was of short duration: a ray of heavenly light, which the Sun of Justice shed upon his soul, dispersed the cloud, and re-established his usual serenity.

Berchmans, feeling that his last hour was come, would be obedient even unto death; he therefore sent word to the father-rector that he was going. The superior, who treated this privileged soul in a manner very different to that in which he would have dealt with ordinary persons, had desired him not to depart this life without summoning him to his bedside, that he might be there to receive his last sigh.

This sort of spiritual conduct may perhaps appear presumptuous or ridiculous to the false prudence of the present age, but our Lord, who abhors this prudence as much as He loves evangelical simplicity, was pleased to bless this obedience of His servant, by enabling him to fulfil a promise which had been made only with the intention of pleasing Him, and in a spirit of blind submission. No sooner did the superior enter his room, than a spiritual joy filled the hearts of both; the obedient dying son was delighted to have kept his word, given to his good father, whilst on his part, this tender father was consoled by witnessing the saintly death of his dear child in Jesus Christ, who was endeavoring to surrender his soul to God whilst in the actual exercise of most heroic virtues. He redoubled the fervor of his love, he sought new strength by imploring the assistance of the saints, particularly of his monthly patrons, whose litanies he had composed, and which he begged might be recited to him: to these were added, in compliance with his request, the Litany of our Blessed Lady. He answered to all with tender devotion, although pronunciation was difficult to him. He showed extreme pleasure at hearing the praises of the Blessed Virgin, as they are expressed in her Litany, but these two titles, "Virgin of

virgins," and "Mother most chaste," had singular charms for him; his whole countenance beaming with delight as he cast his tender looks upon the picture of this Queen of Angels, whenever she was named. In fine, everything in him denoted his devotion towards this most pure Virgin, and the love he had for this her favorite virtue. His agony, though long, had nothing distressing or frightful in it; every moment of it was consecrated by the most holy exercises of religion; he made acts of continual homage, thanksgiving, and love towards Jesus crucified, from whose image he never withdrew his eyes; of confidence in our Blessed Lady, whose beads he held clasped in his dying fingers; of gratitude towards St. Ignatius, esteeming himself happy to die his son, and whose rules he kissed a thousand times, declaring that his consolation in death sprung from fidelity in observing them during life. It was in these acts that the faithful servant of God closed his life, and in the manner he had foretold, viz., in the act of speaking; and the last words he pronounced were the holy names of Jesus and Mary: no sooner had he uttered them, than he surrendered his precious soul into the hands of his Lord. This happened on the 13th of August, between eight and nine o'clock on Friday morning, the day

dedicated to the memory of Jesus crucified, whom he had so tenderly loved, and two days before the glorious Assumption of our Blessed Lady, so that on that day he was in heaven to witness her triumphant festival: it was, I say, under these happy circumstances that John Berchmans died, at the age of twenty-two years and some months, as full of grace and merit as one could be who had grown old in the long and constant exercise of most heroic virtue.

Grace and nature seemed to concur in the design of constituting Berchmans one of the most perfect models that could be presented to youthful imitation. His person was well proportioned; his countenance cheerful and agreeable: his eyes lively; his complexion and hair fair. These natural graces were enhanced by his surpassing modesty, which gained for him the name of "Angel." Animation was not wanting to him; but it was of a sweet and tranquil nature. His sanguine temperament would no doubt have induced a strong inclination to pleasure, if he had not subdued it in early life by the exercise of strict and constant mortification, which, in fact, was become a second nature to him. His constitution was naturally good; but he ruined it in a few years by his austerities and by his incessant application.



It must be remarked, that his attention to the presence of God, and his desires to please Him, did not lead him to neglect the duties of charity and civility towards his fellow-creatures: the more he was interiorly united with God, the more eager he was to serve everybody; and his recollection of mind, however profound, never interfered with his benevolent inclinations. This happy alliance was very apparent in his countenance, which reflected, like a faithful mirror, the admirable virtues of his soul; insomuch, that we may say of this Son of Mary, what St. Ambrose said of Mary herself, that his exterior was the true portraiture of his interior, and that through the features of the former might be traced the sanctity of the latter. This was the universal opinion, in the Roman College, of John Berchmans during his life, an opinion which much increased after his death.

No sooner had the tolling bell announced his decease, than crowds flocked to the infirmary, all equally moved at the great loss which the society had sustained by the death of so holy a young man. The old as well as young were anxious to show him the same marks of esteem, which are usually awarded to great saints only. They respectfully kissed his hands, bathing them at the same time with their tears, earn-

estly begging some little memorials of him to keep as relics.

During the last three days of his life his room had been completely stripped; the poor pictures, before which he had prayed and studied, and the instruments of his pious austerities, were objects of universal desire. A kind of spiritual strife arose among the most distinguished fathers of the college for the possession of his beads, and the little book in which he had inscribed the names of his monthly patrons. The feet of the pious deceased were besieged by a troop of affectionate friends, particularly of young Jesuits, who spent their time in exercising towards him the duties of most tender piety. The confusion in the classes was no less than in the house: as soon as it became known that Berchmans had expired, masters and scholars were equally afflicted; nothing was observed but sighs, tears, and groans. The masters were doubly grieved; in the first place, for their own loss; and in the second, because they considered it a misfortune, not to have witnessed the edifying spectacle of his death: they found no other consolation in their distress, than by changing their lessons into an eulogistic discourse upon him, who was the subject of their mutual regret: masters and scholars mingling their tears, related what each had seen and

known of him; and this conversation enkindled in all hearts such a lively ardor, to go immediately and honor the holy young man, that it was with great difficulty they could be restrained from rushing in a body to the infirmary for this purpose: nothing, in fact, could have withheld them, but the promise of allowing them this satisfaction before his burial; their great numbers, however, amounting to nearly two thousand, scarcely permitted this. In a few hours' time the news was spread all over Rome, that a young man, of most eminent sanctity, was just dead in the Jesuits' College: the whole city was filled with regret: a concourse of persons, most distinguished for rank and talent, hastened to the college, that they might console the fathers, and at the same time express their own regret, that the death of the servant of God had occurred before they were even apprised of his illness. Amongst the prelates who honored him with their esteem, Cardinal Bellarmine was pre-eminent: he expatiated upon the merits of the blessed deceased in a manner which clearly showed the high opinion he had of him. The fame of his virtues drew immense crowds to the Jesuits' church; so that fearing an indiscreet devotion, it was judged advisable to keep the doors closed until the commencement of the office for the dead. No sooner were they opened,

than Father Theodore Buseus began it in hopes of keeping the multitude within due bounds. To prevent too near an approach to the bier, four robust persons had been placed in the lighted chapel, to be the better able to maintain order: these precautions succeeded at first; but after a little time, the pious spectators were not content with merely gazing upon the features of the amiable Berchmans, where still might be admired the traces of angelical modesty and sweetness; these could not be effaced, even by the paleness of death. The people, I say, were not satisfied with looking at him, nor with kissing his hands, and taking away the flowers which were strewn upon his body; they even took off the cap from his head, the crucifix from his hands, and his beads were exchanged several times; his habit was cut in a hundred places at least; and the body would no doubt have been entirely despoiled, if it had not been hurriedly conveyed into the sacristy. It was here that the most illustrious persons, both of rank and character were enabled to satisfy their piety, by respectfully kissing the feet of the servant of God, honoring the tattered remnants of his habit as relics, touching his face with their beads and handkerchiefs, and loudly extolling the Lord, for having given at so early an age such a wonderful example of consummate virtue. Some

ladies of high quality who had not been able as yet to see him, fearing they should lose this satisfaction if he were interred that same evening, so urgently entreated that the ceremony might be deferred until the following day, that it was impossible to refuse the request. This delay enabled a painter to finish a portrait of him, and gave the father-rector time to have a leaden coffin made wherein to deposit his precious remains.

It was judged advisable, moreover, to have his body opened, in order to discover the cause of so early a death in one whose fine constitution seemed to promise an unusually lengthened life. When the operation was performed, his interior was found to be completely dried and parched, which could only result from incessant application, continual mortification, and an extreme ardor which charity alone could enkindle. But what caused the greatest surprise, was the discovery of a sort of prodigy, by which Divine Providence would seem to verify what had often been said of him; namely, that a young man so mild, and so uniformly sweet tempered, could not have any gall; and in effect the surgeons found none whatever. When his heart was extracted, which was done that it might be sent to the college at Louvain, it was found full of blood, a circumstance which

proved what has been already remarked, that the love of Jesus Christ in him must have been very predominant, so completely to have extinguished the love of pleasure, which naturally belonged to him. When the operation was completed, he was replaced in his coffin, and carried back to the church, there to remain until his interment, exposed to the view of those persons who had not been able to satisfy their piety the previous day. As they were chiefly persons whose dignity and authority could not well be resisted, it was necessary to allow them the whole day to gratify their devotion. During this time, carefully as the body was watched, it was impossible to prevent the people from taking away what they considered precious relics, and which every one seemed anxious to possess. The new habit, in which he had been just clothed, was spared no more than his own old ones, pieces were cut off in all directions; his hair and his nails were cut off; and some one even went so far as to cut off one of his toes. The only means of checking this pious violence, was to consign his precious remains to the tomb. This devoted imitator of Aloysius Gonzaga, was first conveyed to his chapel in a coffin, on which was a leaden plate, with an inscription in his honor; from thence he was carried to another chapel, in which the

body of his youthful patron had likewise reposed: in both these chapels he received continued marks of public veneration. His tomb was honored by successive crowds of visitors; every morning it was strewed with flowers, and tapers were lighted before it: the stone which covered his remains was kissed with religious veneration; recourse was had to his intercession, and many, who acknowledged to have been helped by him in their necessities, published the power of the holy young man, and brought offerings to the chapel where they had felt the influence of his intercession. We may here remark, that this eagerness to honor Berchmans was not the blind devotion of the common people, whose simple, and sometimes superstitious piety easily yields to excess; but the most enlightened persons in Rome, mingling with the populace, strove who should show him most honor by openly proclaiming their confidence in him. The most profound politicians were not ashamed to seek lessons of true wisdom at the tomb of this young religious, who in life had only exhibited the simplicity of a dove.

This would perhaps be the proper place to relate the wonders which our Lord wrought to glorify His servant; the wonderful favors granted through his intercession; the numerous

miracles which occurred on the day of his burial; the apparitions which several persons of undoubted veracity had of him; his own predictions of his death, and many other prodigies, juridically verified in the process ordered by Pope Gregory XV.; but as they have not yet the full character of authenticity, (sanctioned by the authority of the Holy See,) my aim has not been so much to describe an extraordinary saint, to be held up as a spectacle of admiration to the whole world, as to trace out, as I have already remarked, a perfect model of imitation for young Jesuits. And surely a model such as this, completed in so short a time, must be itself a miracle; a young man, thus exalted by the grace of Jesus Christ to the most eminent degree of sanctity, at an age when others have scarcely made the first advances, may be looked upon as wonderful. One circumstance that evidently proves the extraordinary virtues of John Berchmans, is the general impression made by his death on the souls of an infinite number of Jesuits, whom it excited to a singular renewal of fervor. No sooner was the news of his death spread through our houses, than every one thought much more of imitating him than of weeping for his loss. The younger members in particular seemed animated with a holy desire to imitate him in



his love of prayer, modesty, and recollection; each one strove to excel in humility and mortification; nothing was heard at recreation but pious discourses; in fine, the idea of this holy young man seemed to inspire all with heavenly ardor. From Italy this laudable emulation was immediately extended to other countries, particularly to Flanders. The college at Louvain (whither the Reverend Father-general had sent the precious deposit of Berchmans' heart) and the noviciate at Mechlin, were foremost in their endeavors to keep alive the memory of Berchmans, by imitating his virtues, laboring with all their strength to become faithful copies of their holy brother; and whether it be, that their tender love for him was a lively spur which urged them onwards to that high perfection of which he had given them such fine examples, or that he in heaven obtained for them singular graces to attain to this perfection, certain it is, that in these two holy communities many Berchmans may yet be found. Nor was it only in our communities that this sacred fire was enkindled: it soon extended to the schools, and was thus communicated to the youth there taught. A great number of young persons of rank and talent conceived a strong desire to follow him in the paths of purity, innocence, and contempt of the world. The deserts of re-

ligion became peopled; and we may say, to the comfort of the society, that this same society at least reaped an abundant harvest. Even those who remained in the world cherished the memory of the servant of God, and frequently owned that it had been a powerful preservative against the corruptions of the age. These are indubitable proofs of true sanctity.

Such is the portrait I proposed to trace of John Berchmans: there remains nothing more towards its completion, but to add his sentiments, which may be called, "the features of the inward man;" and as these need never be distrusted, when sustained by action, I shall describe the manner in which he performed his most important actions, which will form the subject of the fourth book.

## BOOK IV.

THE lives of those saints who began their saintly career early in life, and whose fervor never afterwards relented, are composed of "full days," according to the expression of holy writ; and this plenitude consists in a chain of holy actions, which occupy all the hours of those precious days, without allowing one to pass empty away. Such was the life of John Berchmans, of whom it may be said, (without intending to raise him above other holy souls, whose memory we honor,) that there are few whose years were more uniformly made up of piety and virtue, by the care he took to sanctify every moment of his time. From his entrance into the noviciate, he drew up a plan of action, which he observed to the last day of his life, merely changing it according to circumstances when he quitted the noviciate to begin his studies. We shall give it here, as it was found amongst his writings.

His spiritual occupation in rising is thus traced out: "At the sound of the bell to rise, I will imagine that our Lord Himself calls me

and making the sign of the cross, I will immediately answer, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? my heart is ready;' then banishing from my mind every other thought but that of my meditation, I will arrange the principal points. In taking my dear habit I will kiss it tenderly, rejoicing that I am allowed to wear the livery of Jesus Christ, by returning Him my humble thanks and begging Him never to permit me to become unworthy of it. As soon as I am decently clothed, I will fall upon my knees, to pay my acts of adoration and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity; and that they may become more agreeable to the Eternal Father, I will unite them with those offered to Him by the Word Incarnate during His mortal life, to whom I will show my respect and love by kissing His crucified image. I will next address myself to our Blessed Lady, to my good angel, to my father, St. Ignatius, and to my other holy patrons, particularly the one I shall have chosen for my protector during that day, through whose hands I will present all my prayers to the Divine Majesty: the prayers to be particularly recited are the Pater, Ave, Credo, the prayer of the congregation, and the formulary of my vows, protesting that I will live and die a true son of the Church, of our Blessed Lady, and of the society. After this I

will propose these four things: 1st, to perform all my actions purely for the glory of God, in thanksgiving for His benefits, and in the hope of obtaining new graces; 2ndly, to be particularly attentive to the subject of my particular examen; 3rdly, to die rather than commit the least venial sin, or to transgress the least of my rules; 4thly, to live and die in the society. Having acquitted myself of this exercise, I will prepare for meditation by fervent aspirations, saying, in imitation of David, 'Open, O Lord, my lips and my heart, that I may study Thy greatness, and proclaim Thy praises;' or, 'O my God, may the fire of Thine holy love be enkindled in me during my meditation;' or, 'Teach me, O Lord, how to pray.' The moment I hear the signal to begin prayer, taking holy water, I will make the sign of the cross, place myself in the presence of God, adoring Him profoundly; then I will commence the grand affair of communication with Him, omitting none of the regulations left us by St. Ignatius, under the name of additions. I will excite my soul to bless the Lord, uniting all its powers to praise Him, saying with the royal prophet, 'My soul, bless thou the Lord, and may all that is within me praise His holy name.' I will apply my memory to the recollection of the mystery or truth upon which I am to be

engaged; my understanding to conceive and penetrate its depth; my will to be affectionately attached to it; being fully persuaded, that without this union of my heart with God, my mediation will only be a dry and barren speculation. Towards the end I will address myself to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, begging Them to place a seal upon my heart, in order to preserve what They have operated therein; and in this sort of colloquy, I will endeavor to observe great respect towards the Sovereign Majesty. When I have finished my prayer, I will make a short reflection upon all that passed during it, thanking God for all the good he condescended to confer upon me, and confounding myself for all the imperfection mingled in it, which alone belongs to me. Then I will mark on paper the graces received from our Lord, the resolutions He inspired me to make, and the most powerful motives which induced them. When the time of mass approaches, I will endeavor to be among the first in the church. In going thither I will question myself thus: 'Whither art thou going, Berchmans? what art thou going to do?' to which I will answer myself from the bottom of my heart, 'I am going to present myself to the Eternal Father, to offer Him the sacrifice of His dear Son.' As soon as I am

before the holy altar, after placing myself upon my knees, and making an act of profound adoration, I will renew my morning's general intention ; adding to it those others suitable to this most holy and august mystery of religion. Prostrate then in spirit at the foot of the cross, I will assist at this unbloody sacrifice as I should have done at the bloody immolation on Calvary ; accompanying the priest, and conforming the sentiments of my heart to the words he pronounces until the Offertory ; then applying myself entirely to the passion of our Lord, I will review the principal mysteries of it. Towards the beginning of the Canon I will represent to myself the only Son of God stretching Himself upon His cross as upon His bed of sorrows, presenting His hands and feet to His executioners : at this spectacle, raising my eyes and heart to the Eternal Father, I will say to Him, 'O my God, look upon the face of Thy Son.' By the adorable head of this Divine Victim, crowned with thorns, I will pray for the Sovereign Pontiff, and for Christian kings and princes ; that the first may govern the Church holily, and the latter defend it with zeal. In consideration of this divine head, I will recommend him who is the head of the society, and its other superiors. By the right hand I will conjure the Father of Mercies to show mercy to those who are allied

to me by blood, granting them grace to observe His holy law; and particularly to show His most tender favors to those who are spiritually united with me; such as those with whom I have the honor to live, and, in short, every member of the society, with whom I am closely bound in Jesus Christ; begging Him to grant them grace to preserve until death angelical purity; that they may be worthy instruments of the society, and persevere with constant fidelity in the grace of their vocation. By the left hand, I will recommend all my enemies to God, (in case I have any,) begging Him to bless them with His good gifts. By the same hand I will beg the light of faith for infidels and heretics, and the grace of charity for all bad Christians in a state of mortal sin. By the right foot I will present to the Eternal Father all those members of the Society of Jesus, who perhaps do not live up to the perfection of their state; that they may be animated by a new fervor, and concur with the other members of this holy order in promoting the honor of the sacred name. In fine, by the left foot I will beg Him to have pity on all those who have quitted the order, whether through levity or weakness, that they may have grace to return to their duty. At the elevation of the Sacred Host I will adore our Lord Jesus Christ, as truly there present as He was on the tree of



the cross; saying from the bottom of my heart these words of the Church: 'We adore Thee, O Lord, and we bless Thee, because Thou hast redeemed the world by Thy holy cross.' Continuing the same spirit of amorous devotion, I will recite leisurely the 'Anima Christi' attentively considering every word of this devout prayer, so well calculated to inspire love and confidence towards Jesus crucified. When the priest says, 'Nobis quoque peccatoribus,' I will enter with most respectful tenderness into the wound of the sacred side of my dear Saviour; conjuring him to inclose therein, to preserve, strengthen, and protect the society; to permit me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, to dwell there, as in a secret asylum, secure from the attacks of my enemies; and that by the immense charity which induced Him to receive this holy wound, He will be pleased to penetrate my heart with the flames of His most pure love, producing therein those virtues which will make me most pleasing to Himself, but especially those which will enable me to live and die a true son of the society; to give me, for this purpose, an exalted sanctity and great learning, if the latter will tend to the greater glory of God. I will then conclude all my petitions, by begging a filial love of our Blessed Lady; not forgetting an earnest recommendation in favor of the dead, with

whom I may be united either by the ties of blood or by religion, and particularly for those most abandoned. At the priest's communion I will unite my heart with his, by way of spiritual communion; and after receiving in spirit what the holy minister receives in reality, I will join my acts of thanksgiving to his. After this, reflecting upon the manner in which I have performed this action, I will beg pardon of our Lord for the faults that may have slipped in; and then entreat him to present my offering to His divine Father, in union with the sacrifice of Himself, just offered by the priest in His name. I will observe this same method of hearing mass on communion days; only adding frequent acts of desire of this ineffable grace, vouchsafed to me by our Lord, begging Him, by the merits of His passion, to prepare for Himself a worthy resting place. I will occupy myself with these thoughts more particularly from the Pater Noster, using some of the most tender expressions from the Holy Scriptures, in proof of my impatient desire to be united to Him; such as, 'The stag, when thirsty, seeks fountains of water; so does my soul, O Lord, seek Thee;' or, 'Who will procure for me the pleasure of enjoying Thee, my Brother?' or, 'Come, O my Beloved, come into Thy garden.' Then, full of confidence that the Lord hears my sighs, I will imagine that He says this

consoling word to me: 'I will go and cure him.' At this favorable answer, confounded like the humble centurion in the Gospel, I will say, 'I am not worthy to receive Thee into my house, O Lord; say but one word, and I shall be cured.' Seeing that this God of goodness, notwithstanding my unworthiness, still condescends to honor me with His presence, I will affectionately say, conformably with the priest's words, 'May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul to everlasting life!' At the moment I shall have received Him, in a sentiment of profound recollection I will pay Him my respectful homage, and acts of thanksgiving, and of lively faith, most firmly believing, that He whom I possess is the true Son of God and of the Blessed Virgin. Filled with astonishment at the consideration of His greatness and of my own unworthiness, I will ask, 'Whence is this favor, that my Lord and my God should come to me?' With the design of testifying my gratitude, I will beg my holy patrons to supply for my insufficiency by their ardent love. I will add my little devotions and light mortifications to what they are doing for me, together with the renovation of my vows, as the humble and loving tribute of my heart. In fine, after asking of the Eternal Father, in consideration of His dear Son, grace to serve Him perfectly,

and to love our Blessed Lady more tenderly, I will conclude my thanksgiving with the ordinary reflections. Although the foundation of my intentions for communion should be always the same, I may occasionally vary some circumstances, according to the different mysteries which the Church celebrates, having learnt from St. Ignatius, that to follow the spirit and sentiments of the Church is the characteristic mark of solid piety, and is always secure from illusions. Therefore, as this mother of the faithful teaches us to honor Jesus Christ in all the stages of His life, by dividing them into different festivals, I will endeavor to make my devotions conformable to them. This is the plan I may follow during the holy time of Advent, consecrated to the memory of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, and to the birth of an Infant-God, to whom I have for ever devoted all my affections. In going to the church I will imagine that I am about to witness the spectacle of a God made man, and reduced to the infirmities of infancy. As the priest goes up to the altar, I will in spirit accompany the most holy Virgin, and her chaste spouse St. Joseph, on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem: I will attentively consider these holy persons, be the witness of their patience, of their recollection, and of their mod-

esty. These thoughts will occupy me until the Gospel, during which I will renew my faith upon the mysteries of this God-Man; sometimes contemplating the grandeur of His eternal generation, and then reverting to the annihilations of His temporal birth. At the Offertory, I will imagine I behold the Queen of Angels vainly seeking for a lodging in the town of Bethlehem; filled with compassion and astonishment at seeing her thus repulsed, I will offer her my heart, to be the residence of herself and her divine Child. I will admire this august princess entering a lowly stable, there to bring forth the Creator of all things; and beholding Him in the priest's hands at the elevation, I will adore Him as if He were just born. With loving respect I will contemplate His poverty, His lowliness, and His humiliations; at the same time, I will firmly believe, that He, who sits at the right hand of his Father in splendid glory, is the same whom I now behold under the sacramental species, as He who was clothed in poor swathing-bands. I will love Him tenderly in this contemptible and humble state; urging Him with fresh ardor to enter into my heart, as, at the moment of communion, He in reality will do. I will adore Him there most profoundly, with all the powers of my soul, representing to Him, that as He is all-powerful

with His Father, so I hope He will establish and constantly maintain me in His gracious favor; protesting, as Jacob did to the angel, that I will not let Him depart, until He has blessed me and granted me the fruits of a holy communion. As nothing better conduces to this than an exact confession, which purifies the heart of the stains which make it offensive to the Author of all purity, before I receive this amiable Guest I will have recourse to the sacrament of penance. In order to do this with greater profit, I will address myself to our Blessed Lady, to obtain through her means, grace to know and detest my sins; I will beg the same of her dear Son, and His mediation with His Eternal Father. After this short prayer follows my examination of conscience, which must be made without negligence and without anxiety. I will next endeavor to excite a lively sorrow, from a motive of most pure love; and as my desire to please Jesus Christ must be without reserve, so likewise my regret for having displeased Him, and my resolution never more to displease Him, must be without exception. For my method of confession, I will observe that which is common to the society; and my interior disposition at the moment of receiving absolution shall be to consider myself at the feet of my crucified Jesus, receiving the drops of His precious blood, flow-

ing from His wounds, for the purification of my soul; and hearing from His sacred lips these words of grace, 'Go in peace, your sins are forgiven.' On quitting the holy tribunal, I will most affectionately thank my Judge for the merciful decree He has just pronounced in my favor. I will renew my protestations of fidelity, and acquit myself of my penance; and in conclusion, will say with humble gratitude, 'Accept, O Lord, the confession I have just made, however imperfect it may have been; receive it through the prayers and merits of the Blessed Virgin, and of my holy patrons. If any fault has glided in, either in this or in any of my former confessions, whether from want of integrity in the accusation, from want of vehemence in the sorrow, or from want of strength in the purpose of amendment, be pleased to supply for all this by Thine infinite mercy, and grant that the absolution I have received on earth may be ratified in heaven. Amen.'

"Next to the study of virtue, nothing is more necessary for a Jesuit, than the study of the sciences; therefore I must never separate the duties of the scholar from the duties of the religious. I reduce them both to these three heads. The first and most essential, which relates to God, consists in desiring only the greater glory of God in all studies. The true means to nourish

this pure intention, is union with Him by prayer: it is there I shall find light in the obscure path of science, and that holy unction so necessary in dry study, to which my state obliges me. To prayer I must join the general and particular examens; assiduity in daily assisting at holy mass with all possible devotion, and the sacraments of penance and communion every week. These are the means to maintain an interior spirit, which our holy founder employed whilst he was studying in Paris. Having accomplished this duty of piety, (which should be the soul of my studies,) the most useful and the most meritorious method will be to study according to the spirit of the society; to do this exactly, I must be indifferent and without choice; I must apply to that branch of study, and take lessons from that master assigned me by obedience. Having consecrated the first moments of the day to meditation on the science of the saints, I must devote the time which follows to the speculations of human science; carefully reading and studying the lessons of my master; clearing away their difficulties if I am able, if not, I will mark them upon paper, and ask an explanation later. Faithful in studying at the time appointed, I will be equally so in not exceeding the prescribed limits; remembering that the same authority which requires study



for a certain length of time, forbids its continuation beyond that time; therefore, after two hours' application I will interrupt it, in order to return to it with fresh ardor after allowing myself the usual relaxation. In domestic recitations, and in public disputations, I consider that a scholar of the society is obliged to give proof of his talent and capacity, never forgetting at the same time, to give proofs of his modesty and humility. Lastly, I have two things to observe, with regard to the companions of my studies: the first is, always to address them in Latin, (according to the rule,) except during the hours of recreation, if they are Jesuits; the second is, if they are not Jesuits, never to speak to them without permission, to which I add, that having obtained this permission, I will use it only to discourse with them either upon piety or study, in order that they may be either edified or instructed. In a word, that I may fail in none of my obligations, I will have this thought ever present to my mind, 'I have the honor of being a son of the society.' I will give great attention to those actions which are most essential to a religious during the term of his studies, and to neglect none, however light they may seem; besides my morning's general intention, which consecrates them all to God, I will offer them again in particular,

before and after performing them. At the commencement, raising my heart to God, I will say to him, 'My Lord and my God, in acknowledgment of Thine absolute dominion over me, and of the ineffable goodness Thou hast shown me, I offer this action, together with my whole self, to Thee, wishing neither to act nor to exist, but for the interests of Thy glory; I also offer it to obtain from Thy Divine Majesty the graces and virtues necessary for me, such as humility, devotion towards our Blessed Lady, and those dispositions of heart which will make me agreeable to you and her. In fine, I unite it to every similar act of my Lord Jesus Christ, hoping that this union will stamp value and merit upon my action, which it could not otherwise deserve.' Towards the end I will renew my offering, somewhat in these terms: 'The action I have just performed belongs to Thee, O adorable Trinity; I wish I had a thousand hearts, wherewith to offer it to Thee! I present it, together with the tears, blood, and sorrows of Jesus Christ; with the merits of the holy Virgin; with the blood of the martyrs, especially those of the society; with the praises and love of all the angels and saints, who will glorify Thee throughout eternity. Amen.'"

After this detail of exterior actions, chosen from among many others, there only remains

to describe the interior sentiments of the servant of God: it would scarcely be just to separate one from the other, the sentiments of the heart being the main-spring which regulates the actions of saints, whilst their actions are solid proofs of the sincerity of their sentiments. Berchman's are scattered through his writings, without attention to order. Perhaps it will be well to arrange them under certain heads, taking also the liberty to express their sense, rather than strictly to follow his words; designing thereby to make them more useful to my readers, who will find a faithful mirror, in which the whole interior of the holy young man will be clearly represented. The following, therefore, are the pure sentiments of Berchmans' heart.

“To Love God, and to love nothing but Him; or if we love something else, it must be loved only in Him and for Him. It is this which constitutes the felicity of the saints in heaven, and it must also be the merit of those who strive to be such on earth. However slight our attachment to creatures may be, it slackens the cord which binds us to God; we withdraw from the latter what we give to the former. This great God owns no sympathy with a divided heart; He seeks to possess without division what He deserves without reserve. A divided

heart is unworthy of Him, and such an illiberal offering is well calculated to restrain His generosity. What does it signify whether or no our fellow-creatures love us? They are so insignificant; in fact, it is far better not to be loved by them; their friendship is dangerous, and generally costs the person who seeks it, if not the love, at least the caresses and special favors of God. We must not value the esteem of the world; it is at best but a bad judge, which often despises what ought to be esteemed, and esteems what deserves contempt. We are only worth the price at which God values us; true merit must be weighed in His scales; for it is His judgment which alone can decide between real and counterfeit virtues. We risk all when we place our confidence in men: their protection is weak, inconstant, and fragile: they do us but little good, and that little is uncertain: their power is so limited, that all their good-will cannot make us happy. On the contrary, how sweet it is to rely on God! I have then nothing to fear. He is my Father, and my Father is all-powerful: I need not fear, either that He is unwilling or unable to support the child who throws himself upon His bosom. O Jesus, my Love! God of my heart, and centre of all my affections; all my happiness, all my good, both for time and eternity,

rests in Thee alone! I expect no graces, no virtues, but inasmuch as I shall be united to Thee. Thou art the true Vine; I am only an unprofitable branch, having no other life than what Thou givest me by Thy grace. If I remain inseparably united with Thee, I shall share Thy fruitfulness; and sterile as I am of myself, shall bear immortal fruit; but if, unhappily, I separate from Thee, I shall become dry, withered, useless, and only fit to be thrown into the fire. The world, the flesh, and the devil contend with Jesus Christ for the dominion of my heart. Miserable indeed shall I be if they succeed! and I should be deservedly punished for my evil choice, by the cruel slavery that these harsh masters would reduce me to. On the contrary, O my Saviour, how sweet it is to live under Thy laws! Servitude under Thee becomes delightful, and is far preferable to the most unrestricted liberty. In Thee I find everything that can comfort and reassure me in the grand voyage to eternity. Thou art the way I must follow, the light which must guide me, and the true life, to which I look as the term of my pilgrimage. What can I seek for elsewhere! It is true, O my Lord, Thou sometimes seemest to hide Thyself from me, and then all is darkness and dryness; but it seldom lasts long, and I know that Thy loving

providence permits it for my good. As soon as I call upon Thee, Thou hearest my sighs, Thou becomest propitious to my prayers; and raising the veil which concealed the charms of Thy divine countenance, it appears that Thou didst withdraw Thyself for a moment only to make our approaching re-union more close and binding. Thou art good, but Thou art likewise jealous; and Thy sensibility keeps pace with Thy goodness. Thou insistest upon fidelity in Thy servants; and can we flatter ourselves that we are such, when we deliberately consent to displease Thee?

“Perfect love, and the smallest deliberate sin, are incompatible in the same heart; we must be determined never to consent to sin, if we desire the perfection of Thy love. Now, whoever sincerely loves Thee, my Divine Saviour, must love Thee upon the cross and upon the altar: there Thou diest; here, Thou livest for us: it is in these two places I will live and die. Nothing can be more consoling during life, than to pass a great part of it with our Lord residing in the Blessed Sacrament; and nothing can be more consoling in death, than to have truly loved our crucified God: we may then with confidence kiss His image, if we have had courage to copy it faithfully.

“I cannot love Jesus, without loving His

holy Mother. What a fund of consolation for me to know, that the Mother of my God condescends to be my Mother! and that she adopts me as her child! Yes, from my earliest years, I have had the honor of being such; scarcely was I capable of knowing my mother according to the flesh, than you, Divine Virgin, became my Mother according to the spirit! It was in the chapel of Montaigu, that I received the favor of this holy adoption, which has been followed by an infinity of others; but the greatest and most inestimable of all, was that of being led, as it were, by the hand into the society of your dear Son; hoping through your intercession to die in it; and this will be the crown of all the rest. As there are no Jesuits who do not acknowledge, that they owe the favor of being such to our Blessed Lady; so, none can hope to be good Jesuits, unless they profess a tender and solid devotion towards this Sovereign Benefactress. It is in vain to flatter ourselves that we have this solid devotion to the Queen of Angels, if we do not love with her the virtues she so singularly loved, particularly her modesty and her purity. The first was so incomparable, that it appears more than human; the second was so excellent, that it drew to her Him who is purity itself; and as the love of Mary cannot exist in a heart without the love of purity,

so neither can the love of purity long maintain itself there without the aid of modesty, which is its most faithful guardian. After our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Sovereign Mediator, all my confidence is in our Blessed Lady, my dear Mother and my all-powerful Protectress: the wounds of Jesus and the bosom of Mary are my two precious asylums. It is in vain the devils seek my loss; like the timid dove pursued by the hawk, which hides itself in the cleft of the rock, so will I retire into these secure fortresses, which are inaccessible to their fury. If we have not a filial confidence in the Mother of God, how can we live in repose? And can we die tranquilly if we are not shielded by her maternal protection?

“Every religious ought to be particularly attached to the order in which Providence has placed him; it is a duty of justice and charity to respect all other orders approved by the Church; but it is moreover, a duty of gratitude, to add tenderness and respect to justice and charity, with regard to the order to which each individual belongs. The honor which God does to the society, by making use of it to His own glory, must ever oblige me to respect it; but the honor it does me, by ranking me in the number of its children, obliges me to love, no less than to respect it; and how can I show my



lively, my heartfelt gratitude to the order otherwise than by honoring and loving it as a mother, and considering all my brothers as my masters, rendering them, as such, all the services I am able? Even if my unworthiness, joined to the favors I have received, did not inspire these sentiments, the example of Jesus and Mary would engrave them profoundly in my heart. A God descends from the throne of His grandeur, and from being Master of the universe, becomes a Servant: a Mother of God glories in being the hand-maid of Him whose mother she is declared to be, and could the thought of being served, instead of serving others, enter for a moment into my heart after such an example! I must look upon my superior as God's delegate, invested with His authority, the interpreter of His will, in my regard; therefore, when I speak to him, I owe him the most profound respect; when he speaks to me, I owe him the most submissive obedience. As long as my heart is open to him, the devil will never gain access there; and it will be open to him in proportion as I confide in and love him. To preserve these due dispositions I will always consider him as my father, and as holding the place of the best of fathers. I shall never interfere in my destination, whether with regard to place or employment; and

as I certainly should not wish to die either in a house or office of my own choosing, so neither should I seek to live according to my own arrangements.

"I will carefully avoid asking my superiors the motives of their conduct; that concerns them, not me: all my concern must be to receive their commands, and submit to them: what they appoint is the will of God, and that is reason enough for me. I must be severe towards myself, but show only sweetness and condescension towards my brothers. My eyes shall be constantly open to my own faults; I will establish a tribunal in my heart, where I may always accuse myself, but where I may never condemn them. Ever ready to oblige them, my chief pleasure shall be to please them for God's sake. I cannot deny, that if I should meet with any tepid dispositions, whose hearts I could not hope to inflame with the love of God, their society would certainly be painful to me, from a just fear that it might prove contagious; thanks, however, to the Lord, I know no such persons; for all here are animated by extraordinary fervor, therefore it matters little with whom I may associate in the recreation hours, since I may derive profit from the conversation of every one. As Almighty God dispenses His favors differently to His servants,

some appear to be more fervent than others; and I own, that the same principle which would lead me to withdraw from the imperfect and tepid, would give me a strong inclination towards the more fervent, on account of the spiritual intercourse I might have with them; but which it would be difficult to maintain with persons indifferent to the interests of God and their own salvation.

"I do not consider that I offend common charity, by showing particular regard to the lay-brothers, who are placed by obedience, and by their state, in humble offices; for laboring all day as they do, for the convenience or comfort of our bodies, it is only just that we endeavor to procure the good of their souls. I will love all my brothers, but be particularly attached to no one; private friendships are dangerous to a community; when once they glide in, charity is weakened, and good order is reversed. Thanks to our Lord, my heart is free; and as it is tied to nothing, so likewise is it attached to no person. I love nothing, but in Thee, and for Thee, O my God! and if I knew that any other love existed in my heart, I should consider it a profane flame, capable of extinguishing the sacred fire of Thy holy love. Can we persuade ourselves, that we respect our holy founder, that we love our order, or that we seek our perfec-

tion, if we neglect the spirit of our legislator, the good order of religion, or the sanctity of the religious and all comprised in the rules? If the rules of religion be ill-observed, violation of the vows may be expected: a besieged city is soon taken when the out-posts are in the hands of the enemy. We must not undervalue any of the rules because they appear little; they cannot in reality be so, since the salvation and perfection of a religious depend on them; but even if they were little, I would always love them, as being the sacred cords which bind me to Jesus Christ; cords, formed by St. Ignatius, whom I must ever wish to please; and I am certain of pleasing him, whilst I love my rules. Now, as I am incapable of doing great things, my only resource is fidelity in little things; consequently, I would rather lose my life than transgress any one of my rules, being anxious to have at death the consolation of having kept them all. I will never ask a dispensation, but in case of great necessity; as for general dispensations, I will have the greatest horror of them, as being constantly opposed to the spirit of dependance; moreover, they are usually asked, in order to avoid the trouble of frequent applications to the superior, and to insure our own greater liberty.

“The idea which most frequently recurs to my

mind, and gives me the greatest consolation, is to consider all my brothers as my superiors, and myself, prostrate at their feet; the honor of living amongst them, is a favor of which I am so wholly unworthy, that I am equally surprised at my own presumption in asking it, and at the condescension shown in granting it. Being in myself only nothingness and sin, I must esteem myself unworthy of all honor, on account of the first, and deserving of all contempt, on account the second; this must be the rule of my self-valuation; and if my judgment in this respect be true and sincere, I shall be glad that others have the same opinion of me: to be humble only in my own eyes, is to be humble by halves; but to be humbled in the eyes of others, is true humility. The desire I have for humiliations, is the real measure of my humility: if I seek to avoid the former, I have no sincere affection for the latter; and if I have but little love for this virtue, which is the foundation of all sanctity, it must follow, as a necessary consequence, that I have no real intention to become a saint. We shall never attain to this humiliation, so precious in the sight of God, unless we are deeply impressed with this conviction: 'Of myself, I have nothing; and the mere weight of nature would again reduce me to nothing, if the hand of my Creator did not sustain me. If,

of myself, I have anything beyond this nothing, it is another weight which draws me to sin, and which would occasion a thousand dangerous falls, if the hand of my Redeemer did not support me. Behold here, the root of my self-contempt; the fruit of it must be to seek my own abasement on every occasion.'

"I shall flatter myself in vain that I love my crucified Jesus, if I do not also love His cross. If He had not loved it, would He have given so many proofs of His love? Has He not a right to expect from me the same proofs of love? and if He has a right to expect them, dare I presume to withhold them? Even if my duty, as a Christian, did not oblige me to love Thy cross, O my Jesus! the quality of Jesuit would surely be sufficient: as such I have the honor of being Thy companion; shame then would it be on me, to accompany Thee to Mount Thabor, and refuse to follow Thee to Mount Calvary! Self-renunciation is the fundamental law imposed on us by the Gospel; it must be without limits, if I desire to have perfection. This renunciation must begin by the senses, and will produce strict modesty; but it is necessary that it should pass to the soul, and there produce obedience by a total subjection of the will and judgment. We advance in the path of divine love, only in proportion as we check the movements of self-love:

and as the love of God is and must be perfection itself, we can only hope to become perfect by offering violence to ourselves. One of the safest mortifications, and the one which I consider least subject to illusion, is to do what others do, to do it constantly, and with a pure intention. There is nothing in community life, either to wound the body or to nourish pride. Another sort of mortification to which our Lord particularly inclines me, is the custody of my eyes, as being necessary to purity of heart and recollection of mind, without which it is impossible to be a man of prayer. The regulation I have made on this point, is to keep my eyes always cast down, unless charity or necessity oblige me to raise them. The virtue which must watch over them is continual modesty. This virtue has always appeared to me as becoming to a Christian, of obligation to a religious, and of necessity to a Jesuit. It is ornamental to the first, because it was one of the distinguishing features of Jesus Christ, whom the Christian ought to resemble; it is expected from the second, whom it should not only adorn, but even cover, as a cloak, according to St. Paul's expression; it is necessary to the third, because, being obliged by his state to an intercourse with the world, he will never instil principles of virtue in the hearts of others, unless he first edifies them by his modesty,

which must be, as it were, a silent lesson before he begins to speak to them; and unless this dispose them to hear him favorably, his discourses will do but little. Besides this motive there are several others which lead to the esteem of modesty. One of the most powerful with me has always been a desire to imitate therein the Blessed Virgin, who, according to St. Denis, was in this respect pre-eminently remarkable. Next to the example of this good mother, I respect that of St. Ignatius, my holy father, whose rules were not compiled without being watered by his tears, and frequently carried to the holy altar. Moreover, the presence of God, who exacts this respectful comportment, impresses it deeply in my heart, no less than the passion of Jesus Christ, who suffered in all the members of His natural body, to expiate the undue liberties of which the members of His mystical body are guilty.

“I entered into religion, only that I might abandon the inclinations of the world; and I quitted the world on purpose that I might enter the paths of sanctity. I made myself a religious, that I might become a saint; and a Jesuit that I might become a great saint; yet, I shall never be such unless I labor at it in good earnest. Whilst we drag on an imperfect life, time is passing away; our good designs



weaken, the heart of God cools, graces are lost, sanctity slips from us, and we find ourselves at the end of life when we are scarcely at the beginning of perfection. What will it avail me before God to have been a Jesuit, if I have not been a good Jesuit? or, to have been a member of the society, if I have not been animated by its spirit? or, to have been honored with a holy vocation, if I have not duly sustained its sanctity? To become a great saint, it is not always necessary to do great things; it is often sufficient if we do the least, provided that we do them perfectly, when we act with great purity of intention, with order, and by obedience, avoiding caprice and inconstancy. The distinguishing mark of a faithful soul, is to have a great esteem of all things, and a generosity of heart which prepares us for the greatest.

“Thanks to the goodness of Almighty God, I feel a sincere desire and determination, to observe everywhere, and without human respect, the smallest practices of humility, exactitude, and mortification, in the manner suggested to me during my noviciate. They were the seeds of sanctity, which Thou, O my God, cast into my heart: can I resolve to stifle them? Shall I render sterile those graces which have cost Thee every drop of Thy precious blood?

No! never will I forget Thy divine goodness; and rather than fail in my resolutions (which are the effects of it) I would prefer a thousand deaths. Such is the disposition, in which Thy mercy has placed me; through the same mercy, I hope my conduct will ever correspond with such great favors. The great means to secure a continuation of these favors, so necessary for me, is prayer; by which I do not exactly mean that prayer which is made when we are summoned to it by the sound of the bell; we must then pray with the greatest exactitude; because, being made in common, our Lord usually bestows particular blessings upon it; but I must not be content with that; the signal which ends that prayer, must be the signal for me to begin another; less methodical, it is true, but equally lively and loving; it consists in a continual union of my heart with God, which no occupation of the day ought to be able to interrupt. All the peace of my soul, all my advancement in virtue, depends upon my exactitude in performing spiritual duties: when they are well discharged, we are tranquil, and we enjoy a sort of supernatural health and strength; however little we may fail in them, we become liable to trouble, exposed to a thousand imperfections, and deprived of a certain vigor necessary to resist and overcome them.

"However much I may be persuaded of the importance of study, I am still more so of the necessity of prayer; the devotion there imbibed is the soul of a Jesuit. Vain will be his skill in human sciences, if he be unacquainted with the science of the saints; he is only a counterfeit Jesuit in the sight of Jesus Christ, who will not fail one day to make him the same reproach, as he formerly did to the Bishop of Sardis: 'I know your works; you have the reputation of being a living man, nevertheless, you are dead.'"



## APPENDIX.

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### BOOK V.

OF THE ESTIMATION OF SANCTITY IN WHICH  
THE BLESSED JOHN WAS HELD; AND OF  
THE MANY MIRACLES, BY WHICH GOD WAS  
PLEASED TO GLORIFY HIM AFTER DEATH.

#### CHAPTER I.

*Measures adopted by Father Mutius Vitelleschi  
General of the Society, to confine within due  
limits the devotion towards the Blessed John.  
He orders his Life to be written and published,  
and prefaces it himself with a high eulogium.*

It now remains for us to speak, in this Fifth Book, of the great esteem of sanctity, in which the Blessed John was held, especially by his brethren, with whom he almost solely conversed, and of the many miracles, by which God was pleased to render his name glorious and his memory venerated after death.

Although the virtues of this holy youth, confined within the domestic walls, came but little under the observation of externs; nevertheless, scarcely had the first intelligence of

his precious death spread through Rome, when a multitude of people of every age and condition, flocked immediately, as has been already stated, to the Church of the Roman College, to see and venerate his mortal remains. And this concourse kept on increasing during the two days that his body remained unburied; nay, it did not cease, even after the corpse was enclosed in the coffin and deposited in the tomb. Wherefore, Father Mutius Vitelleschi, General of the Society, entertaining a well-grounded fear, that in these almost universal demonstrations of honor, the bounds prescribed by the Apostolical Constitutions and by recent decrees of the Sovereign Pontiff, might be overleaped, found himself obliged to apply a curb to this excessive transport of devotion; and thereupon wrote a letter to Father Virgil Cepari, Rector of the Roman College, which was to be communicated also to the Superiors of our other houses in Rome. This letter, as given in full in the Processes, is as follows:

“Very Reverend Father in Christ: Though all should entertain for virtue and for the particular graces of our good God that esteem which they deserve; nevertheless, on the present occasion of the happy departure of our Brother John, I would remind Your Reverence to admonish all in your College, and to extend

the admonition to our other houses in Rome, that, both in words and in every other external demonstration, they should remember the first spirit of the Society, which characterised its proceedings at the death of the Blessed Father Ignatius himself, and of Father Faber, and of Father Borgia, and of so many other eminent servants of God. Moreover, that they are not to give to seculars any thing which belonged to the said Brother, nor relics of any sort appertaining to him; it being not proper in such matters to anticipate the divine disposition, but rather to await with humility and reserve the times determined by the providence of God. In conclusion, I beseech the Divine Majesty to multiply his blessings upon the whole College, in such a manner that in each one may shine forth the modesty, the regularity and every other virtue of our departed Brother, and that all may become living pictures and relics of him. I commend myself to the prayers and holy sacrifices of Your Reverence and of all. From the Professed House, August 15, 1621. Your Reverence's Servant in Christ, *Mutius Vitelleschi*."

Such measures did he with great wisdom adopt, but two days after the death of the servant of God. But things had already gone too far. For, various miracles having taken place

at the time of the obsequies, as we shall presently relate, so universal a commotion was excited in Rome, that such caution could no longer be observed, and images and relics had to be distributed in great numbers, demanded as they were with such instance even by persons illustrious for their dignity and pre-eminence. For this reason, Father General Vitelleschi ordered Father Virgil Cepari to write the life of John; and upon its completion in 1625, he himself read it, and instead of the usual formula of approbation, chose to prefix to the work the following most loving testimony of his own.

“Our blessed Brother John Berchmans was truly a youth of remarkable innocence and purity, of angelic manners, of wonderful devotion, of solid and perfect virtues; most observant of our Institute and Rules, and most exemplary to all who had intercourse with him, in every place, at all times and on all occasions; in so much that we have not found one who ever observed in him the slightest defect or imperfection. And therefore we hope, that this Life, which I have thoroughly and carefully read, and which is full of virtuous actions proper to a singularly observant and perfect son of the Society, will be the source of great spiritual help to all who read it, but especially to our Fathers and Brothers, and will spur



them on to the acquisition of religious perfection. And every one may rest assured, that the virtues and heavenly favors, and all that is related of him in this history, are true; since I myself have seen a great array of learned, grave, wise and God-fearing persons, who of their certain knowledge depose to them, and I have read their depositions. May it please our Lord to grant us the grace of being able to imitate him herein; this was my intention in causing his Life to be written; and may we hereafter come to the enjoyment in heaven of those eternal goods, which, as we piously believe, he now enjoys. July 18th, 1625. *Mutius Vitelleschi.*"

## CHAPTER II.

*Numerous testimonies to the perfection and sanctity of the Blessed John. Of these a splendid one of Father Cornelius a Lapide is here given.*

Being obliged therefore, in execution of the order given, to compile the Life of the Servant of God, Father Virgil Cepari applied to the Fathers of gravest authority in the Roman College, and begged of each of them to state in writing, according to truth and conscience, every thing virtuous and perfect that they had

observed in the demeanor and habits of the angelic youth. This they did; and so by degrees, counting those of Rome alone and not including a few others sent from Flanders, about ninety most beautiful and uniform testimonies were obtained, which were afterwards inserted one by one in the first ordinary process. But still more than the number of these testimonies, is the character of their authors to be prized; men, for the most part, famed for learning, for prudence, for sanctity of life and spiritual discretion: such as were at that time, to mention only a few, Fathers John de Lugo, Cornelius a Lapide, Famianus Strada, Philip Alegambe, Francis Piccolomini, John Paul Oliva, Horace Grassi, Tarquinius Galluzzi, John Baptist Ceccotti, Bruno Bruni, and Thomas Massucci. Their testimonies would be well worth introducing here, did I not fear fatiguing the reader by repeating what he has already learned in the preceding history. I shall content myself with subjoining only that of Father Cornelius a Lapide, which Father Cepari wished to be added to all the editions of his Life; and I will translate it faithfully from the original Latin into our own language.

“I have observed,” says he, “in our John Berchmans, a virginal bashfulness, candor, modesty, silence, innocence, and purity. Often

have I heard from ours, that they marvelled and were unable to say whether greater virtue existed in Blessed Aloysius, and that they did not see what could be added to the virtue of John. He was adorned with a remarkable humility, by which he yielded to every body. He always first uncovered his head to all our lay Brothers, although they may not have noticed it or returned his salutation. He respected all, not only Superiors, but every one else, and especially priests. It has many times happened me, that walking hurriedly in the winter time on account of the cold in the hall, and meeting him, he suddenly stopped, uncovered his head and remained there immovable with humble countenance until I had passed.

I have frequently heard from his Master, that every month he presented him a note of the prayers and penances which through gratitude he offered to perform for him. He was dear to all by his affability and sweetness; and I have heard no one ever complain of him, or notice in him any defect, so that he seemed already ripe for heaven, having in a short time accomplished a long career of life. He always wore a pleasant and cheerful countenance; his speech was frank, his gait quick, but not hasty. In a word, his manners and his actions

seemed more angelic than human. He attended to the lamps with wonderful diligence, and often served in the kitchen. The lay Brothers and the sick extolled his charity to the skies. He helped, consoled, respected and served all. He was inflamed with a fervent spirit of charity. He was most zealous for obedience and observance of the Rules. Being sent to me occasionally by some one, and knocking at my chamber door, though he heard me say that he should come in, he remained in silence, and repeated the knock a second and third time, till finally I arose and went to the door; because he said, that for that time he had not asked leave to enter my chamber. He often exercised himself in penances and mortifications, both private, and public, in the Refectory, as we ourselves have repeatedly seen. He attended much to prayer, and seemed to be always in the presence of God; hence he did every thing with exactitude and perfection, in so much that even in the least things there appeared in him beyond others propriety of conduct and virtue; he seemed to be truly *a child of grace*. Of his diligence and study an illustrious testimony is rendered by his teacher, who proposed him in the Roman College as the model of a true student of the Society of Jesus. And God grant that all may imitate him! For

he shone brightly in the Roman College, as a star shines in the heavens. When after dinner and supper he stopped to converse with me, he recreated me in our Lord, by not speaking of any but religious and spiritual things, and especially of those that appertain to our Institute, in regard to which he was most zealous. A short time before his death, while visiting Saint Paul's at the three fountains in company with me, the whole way he spoke of nothing but the aforesaid things, and gave a bright proof of obedience and modesty. For I desiring to go to Saint Sebastian, and preceding him a little to induce him to follow me, there he stood before the church with head uncovered, with bashfulness and with downcast eyes making a sign of turning back. I questioned him upon this; and he with great humility answered me: My Father, we will not arrive in time for the hour of table, if we do not return the same way we have come. I then turned back, and after dinner, thinking that I wished to return home, he said to me: Your Reverence can return with another companion, as I have not permission to go back; wherefore on his account I remained at the villa till evening. In familiar conversations, if I had some opinion different from his own, he was silent, listened and remained

quiet. He was exceedingly devout to the Blessed Virgin, whose son he used to call himself. At death, although inexperienced in singing, he sang most sweetly: *Monstra te esse Matrem: Show thyself a Mother.* To one of our preachers who begged of him some salutary advice, within my hearing he said: Let your Reverence defend always the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary until death. A paper was found, subscribed with his own blood, as is believed, in which he affirms with an oath, that he would always defend it. Of his purity, and immunity from all mortal sin in his whole life, and from all deliberate venial sin in Religion, and also from carnal emotions, his Confessor has rendered public testimony in his funeral oration, which I myself and others heard.

When about to die he gave no sign of sadness or other affliction, as I have also noticed at other times during his life; nay, he was always resigned, patient, serene, and tranquil. A little before he received the Viaticum, I asked him in secret if he had any thing which disturbed him and afflicted his mind; and he with open hands and with erect brow smiling, asserted, that nothing whatever disturbed him. Then speaking to himself, and burning with fever, he asked for some water to cool his

mouth and hands; and I gave it to him in a cup. I asked him if the fever tormented him. He answered that it did, but in such a manner that he uttered no audible groan, nor gave any indication of pain; he then took the syrup, and immediately requested me to return thanks, as if he had supped. I recited the grace, while he remained attentive and made the answers; and then discoursing on devout subjects, I suggested to him to say: *Jesus meus, amor meus, et omnia; My Jesus, my love and my all*: rejoicing, he replied: "Yes, yes: *Jesus centrum cordis, Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in æternum; Jesus is the centre of my heart, the God of my heart, and God is my portion forever*; and he repeated what he had heard from the Father Rector: *Puer meus, noli timere, quia ego tecum sum, dicit Dominus: si transieris per ignem, flamma non nocebit tibi, et odor ignis non erit in te: liberabo te de manu pessimorum, et eruam te de manu fortium. My child, fear not, for I am with thee, saith the Lord: if thou pass through fire, the flame shall not hurt thee, and the smell of the fire shall not be in thee: I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the mighty*. I inquired of him if he desired any thing; and his answer was, that I should celebrate holy Mass for him the next day. I did so, but did not obtain what I desired, that

is to say, his cure, but what he desired, that is, to die and be with Jesus Christ in heaven; for he expired at the end of the Mass. Pray for me, O my Father, he added, that I may not become disgusted with these sweet things which are given me: and he obtained what he desired, for soon after he was reduced to extremity. Ours distinctly recommended themselves to him when about to die, begging of him some advice, which he gave to each of them so appropriately, that some remarked, that he could not have given them any counsel more suitable to them if he had penetrated into the secrets of their consciences. So great was the concourse of externs at his funeral, that it became necessary to employ guards; and notwithstanding this they carried off his beretta, his slippers, his cross, his Rosary, and even his habit. It seemed to me that I saw once more in Rome the concourse at the funeral of St. Alexius. Many are continually asking for his relics, and not a few confess that they have obtained favors from God by means of them. But I esteem still more the affection of love and piety, which after his death infused itself into the entire College, as if inspired by God through the merits of his Servant.

It is with difficulty that I burst into tears; yet when in the church I looked upon his



countenance I could not restrain them, and therefore I turned away my face from him, that I might be able to go on with the office of the dead. Often is he present to my mind, and I seem to behold him before me day and night. Nor am I terrified at this; on the contrary, filled with a spiritual joy, I feel myself inflamed to serve God more ardently. Nor can I induce myself to pray for him deceased, but rather I desire that he should pray for me, and that my soul may one day be with his. Ah, yes! may my soul live and die, as lived and died the beautiful soul of John. Many cannot satisfy themselves with speaking of him. God grant, that there remains in us a holy memory of him, which we may often consider and emulate. He was a youth in age, but in virtue he was advanced; constant, always the same; exact, but not scrupulous; cheerful, but moderate, and he tempered cheerfulness itself with religious gravity. He made such account of time, that he was never seen idle, but always occupied, always serious. Not to take away time from his studies, he sometimes shortened the recreation he took with me, though pleasant and devout, and after the fashion of a lay brother, girding himself with an apron he then attended to his lamps, in order not to be obliged to spend therein any time destined to study

His laugh was moderate without discomposure; he had wit without wounding any one, he had grace of manners without affectation. The saying of the Apostle was appropriate to him: *Sermo vester semper in gratia sale sit conditus; Let your speech be always in grace seasoned with salt.* I do not remember to have ever heard from his mouth an idle word, and much less one that was offensive to any body. He thought well of all and spoke of them with honor; never have I seen him melancholy, never in a passion; nor was he therefore slow in working, or indolent, but on the contrary diligent and expeditious. He publicly defended the whole of philosophy with great praise for learning and modesty. He venerated the Saints to a wonderful degree; he had chosen several of them as his protectors, distributing them alternately for each week; and once he repeated to me the catalogue and order of them. He had no particular affection for any one, but his love was the same and common to all. In recreation he joined with whomsoever he met first, and often and willingly with the Brothers, who still eulogize his spirit. He entertained great things in his mind. He desired to live and die in the encampments, assisting the soldiers who fought for the faith, as another soldier, nay, as the standard-bearer of Christ. He foretold his

BLESSED JOHN BERCHMANS.

death and the combat he sustained in it, and generously overcame; then recovering his breath, which he had lost, joyfully sighing towards heaven, he placidly and holily expired in the Lord. He wished to be placed on the ground; and then he received the holy Viaticum, previously protesting that he desired to live and die in the Catholic faith, in the Society, &c. He asked for the Rules of the Society, saying that he had never deliberately transgressed any of them. He held the cross in his hand, and not being able to hold it up any longer, another held it before him, and whithersoever the latter moved it, he followed it with his eyes and with his mind. Some grave personages used to come to the schools and to church, solely to admire his modesty and piety. I met him ordinarily, when I went up to the school, and I always saw him with a serious countenance that breathed joy; and even now, looking upon his image, it seems to me that he excites joy by his merits and mediation with God. In a word he was, both for me and others, a continual mirror and spur to the exercise of virtues. God grant, that on the last and great day of judgment, I may rise again with him to glory, and that, before the throne of God and of the immaculate Lamb, I may deserve to raise my head at his feet. Amen.

*Cornelius a Lapide."*

## CHAPTER III.

*God manifests to several persons the glory of his Servant.*

Such then was the idea which all entertained of the virtue and perfection of John; and God, always wonderful in his Saints, soon designed to confirm and augment this opinion, by manifesting through special revelations, accompanied by numerous miracles, the high post of glory, which, in accordance with his merits, his faithful servant had already attained in heaven.

At the time that John passed from this life, there was in the infirmary of the Roman College, as a convalescent, a lay Brother of the Society, Thomas di Simone, a Perugian, who died some months afterwards. This man was very humble and simple, a contemner of himself, and dear to God by his religious virtues. All the time that was left him from his ordinary occupations, whether by day or by night, he spent in prayer; and not unfrequently he was therein favored by God with supernal illuminations of mind, and by the most holy Virgin with various apparitions

On the night immediately following the death of John, between seven and eight o'clock, being according to his custom in prayer, he saw all at once the heavens open, and from a lofty throne of clouds full of light he beheld descending the most glorious Mother of God, the Queen of Angels, who with great exultation and unusual joy was borne on a chair of majesty by two celestial personages. One of those who carried it wore a suppliance; but the person of the Blessed Virgin hindered Thomas from seeing his face in passing; he did not therefore know who he was, but it occurred to his mind that it was the Blessed Aloysius. The other, who was on the side nearest him, he saw distinctly, and knew perfectly; it was Brother John Berchmans, who was clothed after the manner of the Jesuits, most modest in countenance, and with great joy and contentment. Passing rapidly across, they seemed to him to enter as if into a spacious field, where were many glorious and happy souls, to whom the most holy Virgin with great jubilee and joy exhibited the new acquisition she had made in the glory of Paradise, of this her beloved servant and son, in order that they might rejoice with her thereupon and make a feast of the occasion. When this vision had disappeared, Thomas remained much consoled and assured, that John enjoyed great

glory in Paradise, and was tenderly caressed by the Mother of God. He related all to the Father Rector, as his Superior, for the glory of God and of his servant John.\*

Not only in Rome, but also in distant countries did God wish to make known the glory of this blessed youth. There lived in Mantua, in great esteem for sanctity, a lady, D. Margaret Rossi, a Florentine, who held the office of maid in waiting to the pious Duchess Eleanora Medici. From her earliest years she had consecrated her virginity to God by vow; and now at the age of about seventy years she was leading in the midst of the court a very devout and spiritual life. This virgin, on the morning of the 16th of August, 1621, came to the College of the Society, and having sent for Father Alexander Caprara, her confessor, she said to him: One of your young men, who is a Saint, has died in a distant place: there was a great concourse of people at his obsequies, and by his relics God operates many miracles. The Father answering that he knew nothing of this, she added: You will see that you will be written to concerning this matter. Some days having elapsed, Father Caprara received from Lucca, a letter from Father Paul Bambino, which informed him, that on the 13th of August, a

\* **Ex. MSS. P. Virgilio Cepari.**

young scholastic of ours, named John Berchmans, had died in the Roman College, and that his death had been glorified by God with a great concourse of people and by miraculous favors. Considering, however, that Margaret could not have known such things by any human means, the Father desired to examine her more formally, and to hear from her the whole matter.

She said, that on the night between the feast of the Assumption and of St. Roch, that is, between the 15th and 16th of August, having finished her accustomed mental prayer at eight o'clock, she wished then to say the matins of the Blessed Virgin, as she usually did the day before; and in the meantime she was rapt out of herself, and conducted by a young man to a distant place into a church, where there was a great gathering of people for a deceased youth of ours, who was on a bier, clothed in white, and honored as a Saint. She did not see him perform miracles; but she distinctly saw that a Father was writing in the sacristy, and one of our young men, who had charge of the bier, was going backwards and forwards relating some things that were occurring; she thought that miracles were written down.\* She re-

\* It was true, that in the Sacristy a Flemish Father was noting in writing the favors which took place, as they were related to him by a young student.

mained in this rapture till about ten o'clock; and then returning to herself, she found her strength exhausted, as if she had accomplished a long journey. Then reciting the office of the Holy Virgin, she experienced in herself great consolation, that one of the young men of the Society was so honored by God. After she had related all this, her Father Confessor read to her the letter he had received from Lucca; the pious lady returned many thanks to God for having made her a partaker in such a vision, and begged the Father to obtain for her a little piece of the clothing of John; and she received it soon after from Father Virgil Cepari, Rector of the Roman College, to whom she afterwards wrote, that God had operated many miracles by means of that relic.\*

Similar to this was the favor which a pious virgin of Rouen in France received from God. On the night of 13th of August she also was rapt in spirit, and saw a young scholastic of the Society, who lay dead before the altar, and his soul was glorious in heaven, and equal both in merit and in reward, to the Blessed Aloysius. She did not know of what young man of ours this vision was to be understood, for she could not apply it to any one of those who were then

\* Ex. MSS. P. Virgilii Cepari, et ex Epist. P. Alexandri Caprara..



present in the College of Rouen. It happened a short time after, that two Fathers passed there, who were going to Flanders and who carried in a casket the heart of John Berchmans. The devout virgin knowing nothing of the arrival of the Fathers, repaired to the College, at an hour to her unusual, to make known to the Father Rector, her confessor, a certain trouble and affliction of mind, which tormented her. On this occasion having heard the account of the arrival of the two Fathers and of the relic of which they were the bearers, she was permitted to see and to kiss it: instantly she felt all her trouble and affliction vanish, and her heart was filled with incomparable consolation; so that when she had entered the church and put herself in prayer, she was wholly dissolved in the most tender tears of devotion; and during this it seemed to her that she heard a voice, which said to her, that this was the heart of that young man, whom she had already seen in her vision. She desired to call her confessor again, to make known to him what had happened; but as it was already dark, she concluded to return home. But in leaving the church she found herself impeded to such a degree, that she could not proceed a single step further; and in the meantime, the Father Rector meeting her, beyond

all expectation, she related the fact to him in full, and felt herself free from all impediment. On her return home, she placed herself in prayer, and saw, more clearly than before, the glory and beatitude, which the Blessed John Berchmans enjoyed in heaven; by whose intercession she now obtained from God a particular grace, which she had so long prayed for without effect. This whole matter is found recorded in the annals of the College of Rouen; and the account of it was sent in various ways from France to the Father Rector of the Roman College, subscribed both by the Father confessor and by the virgin herself.\*

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### *Miracles which took place at the time of the obsequies.*

Let us now proceed to the miracles wrought, giving the first place to those which occurred at the time that the obsequies of the Blessed youth were taking place in the church of the Roman College. And first of all I will transcribe a fact in the very words in which it was

\* All this account, as well as the two preceding, is Father Cepari's: the letter, with the original subscriptions of the Rector of Rouen and of the pious lady, is still preserved.

narrated by one who was not only an eyewitness, but also a party to what transpired. "Catharine du Recati, a woman of seventy-eight years of age, who was blind of both eyes, having heard that a scholastic of the Society of Jesus had died in the Roman College with the reputation and opinion of sanctity, came to the church during the time of the obsequies, with the purpose and desire of approaching the body of the deceased, and of touching her eyes with his hands or clothes, hoping to receive aid and a remedy for her blindness. But as the concourse of people, which was almost countless, did not permit a near approach, she was unable to put her good desire into execution, and was forced to return home afflicted and disconsolate. It pleased our good Lord, for the advantage of this poor blind woman and for the exaltation of his holy Servant, that on the following day, which was the 14th of August, she should visit the house of the lady Victoria Altieri, who, moved by the fame of his sanctity, was desirous of seeing the body of the youth, to which sepulture had not yet been given, in order to satisfy many of the principal ladies, and amongst others that most noble lady the Duchess Sforza. Upon this the desire of the poor blind one, of doing what she had been unable to accomplish the day before, was

renewed within her, and she said: Oh! if I too could go and see the body of this holy youth, I would hope to receive some favor for my eyes. The lady Victoria took her into the carriage with her and brought her to the church. Immediately Catharine had herself conducted to the bier, on which lay the deceased; and stating that she wished to touch her eyes with something appertaining to the Servant of God, she was told by one of the Society who was present, to take the fingers of the dead and touch her eyes with them. She did so, and instantly exclaimed: I am cured; I see. She repeated the touch, and recovered her sight entirely; for at the proof made of it she could really see and discern the most minute objects. There were present at the miracle, Lorenzo and Lady Victoria Altieri, Maria Testa, and Serafina Mancini, who uniformly testify, that the said Catharine was blind, and that what is here written is true.

And I, Aloysius Spinola of the Society of Jesus, have written this account, as I was present on the occasion, and was the one who said to the woman: take the fingers of the deceased in your hand and touch your eyes with them. For all of which be praise and glory to God, to the Blessed Virgin, and to the good John Berchmans for ever and ever. Amen."\*

\* Proc. Ordin. Rom. page 268.

Arsilia Altissimi of Tivoli, a lady of great perfection and singularly favored by God, had been suffering for several days with a most acute pain in the side, which drove sleep from her eyes and allowed her no repose. As she resided near the Roman College, having heard the bells tolling for the dead on the morning of the 13th of August, 1621, she called to her daughters Victoria and Anna, and placing herself with them before the oratory, where she was accustomed to pray: Let us, she said, recite a *De profundis* for this Father, who must have died in the College. Thrice did she force herself to begin the prayer; and thrice, in place of the *De profundis*, the *Te Deum* rushed into her mind and upon her tongue; and the same thing happened to her two daughters. Astonished at this, she arose and said: Some great servant of God has expired in the College. At the same time she felt engendering in her heart a lively desire of seeing him, and a firm confidence of being cured of her malady through his intercession. The evening of the same day, accompanied and supported by her daughters, with great difficulty and much suffering, she reached our church, when a great number of people were still assembled. Approaching the corpse, she was seized with an internal movement of spirit, it appearing to her, as she said,

that she saw an Angel of heaven. She placed her handkerchief over the face of the dead ; she then applied it to her side, and in that instant was free from all pain and perfectly cured. Grateful for the benefit received, she of her own will committed all the facts to writing at that time, and the year following deposed to them upon oath in the Process, which was compiled in Rome on the virtues and miracles of John Berchmans.\*

Before the funeral rites, many scholars, who desired to have a good view of the body of John, were admitted into the church by the door of the house. Among these was a noble youth of fifteen years, a boarder in the Roman Seminary, who was much esteemed by all for his wisdom, goodness, and purity of life. Having approached quite near to the deceased, he remained a good while motionless, regarding him fixedly with indescribable pleasure. He returned several times to the same spot, while the Fathers were reciting the office ; and at one time standing, at another kneeling, he stopped a long time to look with delight upon the body of John, and seemed unable to withdraw himself from the sight. The ceremony having terminated ; he finally returned to the house, and having arrived there, he with much sim-

\* *Ex Relat. autogr. et ex Proc. Ordin. Rom.*

plicity and ingenuousness asked the Perfect, why the Fathers had put those diamonds on John's forehead. The Perfect answering, that there were none there, the youth reasserted that he had certainly seen two diamonds placed over the eyebrows of the deceased, and moreover a most vivid splendor around his head. The Perfect judging this to be something supernatural, requested the youth to relate the fact to Father Francis Piccolomini; but becoming aware of the estimation in which his account was held, he through modesty withdrew, and was unwilling to say any more. The Prefect did not deem it proper to let this matter pass, and betimes the next morning he was in the College to relate it to Father Virgil Cepari, informing him at the same time that this youth reposed great confidence in a certain Father of the College, to whom he believed he would tell it. The Father Rector thereupon commissioned this Father to interrogate the youth adroitly about it, as he did that very day: and the boy, with modest blushes, again affirmed as true, that he had seen over the eyebrows and eyes of John some jewels of the greatest brilliancy, and around his head a halo of most vivid light which dazzled his eyes; and that on this account he had conceived a special devotion to him. It seems as if God had wished

by this to show the accidental glory which John enjoyed on account of the singular modesty of his eyes, which all agree in saying was in him most remarkable.\*

## CHAPTER V.

### *Favors and miracles operated in behalf of the Religious of the Society in Italy.*

It is impossible to express to what an extent these miraculous manifestations, with which God glorified his Servant immediately after death, increased his reputation and enlivened confidence in him, especially among the Religious of the Society of Jesus, who had more nearly looked with admiring gaze upon the holy life and consummate perfection of John. For three months Father John Baptist de Ruschi had been lying ill in the infirmary of the Roman College, attacked by a continual and slow fever, which was little by little wasting his strength. All the remedies of medical art having failed, he was declared an incurable consumptive. To this was added, in the August of 1621, a most severe pain in the head, which gave him neither peace nor rest, and brought him to death's door. It was at this

\* All this account is F. Cepari's.



time that the Blessed John died, and instantly the report spread of the miraculous favors obtained through his intercession, while his corpse was still present in the church. Animated therefore with a firm confidence, Father John Baptist asked for a relic of the Servant of God, and placed it with great devotion under his pillow: on the instant the pain in his head ceased. His fever still remained, and was so far from abating, that it seemed to have acquired new strength. Then, says he, in his attestation, the mattress on which died John of holy memory was placed under me; and it was a wonderful thing, that from that time forward I had no farther attack of fever, I regained my strength, and arose from my bed completely restored; and several months have since elapsed, during which I have enjoyed perfect health. In faith of all which, I have written and subscribed to the present attestation with my own hand, this 9th day of December, 1621, rendering thanks for all to God our Lord, and to his Servant John, through whose intercession I believe that I have obtained this favor.\*

A young scholastic of ours, named Julius Rettabene, after long and complicated maladies which succeeded each other, was also attacked by a high fever, accompanied by dangerous

\* *Ex Relat. authent. et ux Proc. Ordin. Rom. fol. 300.*

and fatal symptoms. He suffered in addition violent qualms of stomach, and a stricture of the throat of such a nature, that he suffered the pains of death every time he swallowed a little food or drink. Given up by the physicians, he disposed himself to receive the last sacraments and prepare for death, which he anticipated as assuredly near at hand. A Father who continually attended him, moved to compassion for him, suggested to him at a happy moment to recommend himself to the dear John Berchmans, who had just passed to a better life, and who had commenced operating miraculous favors both within and out of the house. Julius thereupon assuming courage and confidence, with great tenderness of devotion exclaimed: "O good John, aid me, thou, who seest how much I suffer." Scarcely had he pronounced these words, when he was able to take a most placid repose of half an hour: then entertaining the hope of obtaining a complete cure, he caused the relic of the heart of John to be brought near his bed, and with much feeling prayed thus: "If it be for the greater glory of God and the salvation of my soul, obtain for me of his divine Majesty the desired health: otherwise give me strength and patience to support my pains to the last." Having finished this brief prayer, he took the relic into his

hand, kissed it, and placed it near him. The effect which followed, was, that his fever and pains ceased, and in a very short time he regained his strength and recovered his health perfectly, as he himself deposed, and other eye-witnesses confirmed the statement.\*

Very similar to this is the favor which another religious of the Society received, shortly after John's death; and it will be perhaps better to hear the succinct account of it from his own lips: "I, Louis Gabrieli of Fano, a religious of the Society of Jesus, finding myself ill of a very dangerous fever, which was growing malignant, with a most acute pain of the head, and at the same time with much fear for my life, and having heard the account of the many favors and miracles which God our Lord had wrought in many persons, by the invocation of his servant John Berchmans of our Society, who died in the Roman College on the 13th of **August** in the order of sanctity; whilst I was in the height of the fever, and suffering a pain in the head more severe than usual, I recommended myself to the Venerable John, promising him, if he cured me, that I would strive to be devout to him, to honor him, and to proclaim his virtues to all. On this, the pain in my head vanished at once, insomuch that I did

\* Proc. Ordin. Rom. fol. 251, 302, 303.

not trust myself, and shook my head to see whether it were true that it did not pain me. Moreover the fever, which was still at its height, ceased, and returned no more; I then regained my strength to such a degree, that rising from bed without any assistance, I went to the desk, fell upon my knees, and returned thanks to the Lord God and to his servant John for the favor received. In faith whereof I have written the present attestation with my own hand, to the praise and glory of God and of his servant John, this 9th day of December, 1621."\*

Lorenzo Mori, a Lay Brother of the Society, was attacked about the 24th of June, 1621, with so great a pain in the head, accompanied by a slight fever, that he went out of his mind and became completely delirious. He remained in this condition for fifteen days, after which he rallied somewhat, but only for a short time: relapsing then into the same malady worse than before, after having uselessly tried many and various remedies for an entire month, he was judged incurable. Nevertheless, before giving him up, the physician, importuned by those of the house, ordered him a certain medicine, I know not what. But the evening preceding the morning on which he was to take it, he

\* Ex Relat. authent.

was urged by the infirmarian to recommend himself to John Berchmans, who had died a few days before, and was now working wonders. The sick man agreed, and though he had been till that hour unable to close his eyes, he suddenly fell asleep and rested tranquilly. When morning came, he felt himself so well, that he judged the medicine to be no longer necessary; he nevertheless took it, saying within himself, that it could do him no harm. He could not, however, retain it, and immediately rejected it, remaining notwithstanding entirely well. Three days after he was awake during the night, with such violent pains in the head, that he greatly feared relapsing into his former condition. But having resumed his sleep, he seemed to behold four of the Society, and amongst them a most beautiful youth, whom he supposed to be John Berchmans, whose relic he kept near him. The latter looking fixedly upon him, said with a smile: You were afraid then, were you? And having placed his hand on the head of the sick man, he recommended to him the exact observance of the Rules, and disappeared, leaving him entirely cured.\*

Father John de Angelis was reduced to a still worse state in the College of Sezze. He had been suffering for six years with the gout;

\* Proc. Ordin. Rom. fol. 307, 320, 395.

and in 1627 the disease increased to such a degree, that not being able to maintain himself upon his feet, he was forced to lie in bed for a long time, attacked by the most violent pains. He had already lost all feeling in the right arm, and in addition to this, his legs, knees, and stomach became unusually swollen; and his condition threatened to terminate in the dropsy with an obstinate obstruction of the liver. The physicians employed all their skill and industry, at least to mitigate the violence of so many diseases united; but all availed nothing. Then the sick man having nothing more to hope for from human remedies, turned with lively faith to implore the aid of heaven, invoking the intercession of Venerable Berchmans, whom he had known in the Roman College, and to whom he bore a great affection. To him therefore he recommended himself from his heart; and in that very instant he found himself free from his disorders, and arose from his bed in better health, than that which he had enjoyed before his sickness. The news of a cure so sudden and so perfect spread through the city, and formed for a long time a great theme of glory to God and of exaltation to his servants.\*

The Blessed John having been, during his

\* Proc. Ordin. Setin. in Roman. compulsat.

life, not only an admirer, but a most faithful imitator of the angelic Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, God was pleased that they should frequently concur in rendering aid to their clients. Memorable is the cure of Joseph Spinelli, a young man of twenty-two years of age, who was struck with apoplexy in the College of Palermo, where he was pursuing his theological studies. The narrative of this fact, with all its most minute circumstances, is given at full length by the continuators of Bollandus in the acts of Saint Aloysius. I shall content myself with presenting here a very brief summary of it. After his apoplexy, then, young Spinelli, being left speechless and paralyzed, received the last sacraments, expecting death from hour to hour. His mental faculties, however, were still perfect, and he had recourse to the intercession of Saint Aloysius, to whom he was most devout. On the night of the 11th of February, 1634, Blessed Aloysius appeared to him accompanied by the Venerable Berchmans, and turning towards him most lovingly, inquired what he wished of him. Joseph answered, speech and health, should such be God's pleasure. Aloysius said to him: You shall have both; and then added: Be of good heart and arm yourself with courage, for a long career remains before you. He then predicted to him

the journeys and toils he would have to sustain in going to, and laboring amongst idolatrous nations. Not long after this first apparition Joseph was overtaken with a sweet sleep, in which the two angelic youths were before him again. Berchmans held a cup in his hand; Aloysius, after having spoken for some time to the sick man, animating him to perfection, to make good use of his speech, and to meet generously for Christ's sake the fatigues which awaited him, desired him to renew the vow he had made some days before, of fasting on his vigil and practising certain other devotions. He then dipped his finger in the cup and made the sign of the cross on Joseph's tongue. The latter awaking exclaimed in a loud voice: "O Blessed Aloysius!" and thus he first regained his speech. About four days having elapsed, Berchmans appeared to him in a dream, and told him that the time had now arrived for his entire cure, and that therefore he should recommend himself from his heart to Blessed Aloysius. The sick man did so; and the night following he saw again the two holy youths together. Berchmans had again his health-bearing cup, and Aloysius, after having given some counsels to Joseph, dipped his finger in the cup and with the sign of the cross anointed his legs, side and arm. Berchmans reverently



wiped the anointed parts, and Aloysius turning towards the sick person, said: "Rise up, for thou art well; keep thy promises and make thyself a saint." Saying this, the heavenly benefactors disappeared, and Joseph, awaking, exclaimed: "I am cured, I have no more sickness." He arose immediately from bed, and full of vigor and strength went down into the church, where he served mass and received holy communion. On the completion of his studies he was made priest, and, according to his vow, asked to go to the missions of India, and was sent to the Philippine Islands, where he lived and labored many years like an apostle, and terminated his life by a holy death.\*

## CHAPTER VI.

*Favors and miracles wrought in behalf of his relations and countrymen.*

The Blessed John was as lavish of favors to those united to him by blood and by the ties of a common country, as he was to the religious of the Society. He had an aunt, named Mary Berchmans, who from her tenderest years had dedicated herself to God in a congregation of pious ladies, who in Flanders, where they are

\* Ex Proc. Ordin. Panormit.

still flourishing, are called Beguins. From thirteen to fourteen years she was afflicted with a flux of blood, which at certain given periods continued to flow, for fifteen or more days, even from her mouth and nose. Reduced thus to extreme weakness, she was obliged for the most part to lie in bed, and to pass many days in a total prostration of strength, which she was not able to restore by taking even the least food. To this were afterwards added most acute pains in the head, which deprived her of her reason, and caused her to rave like a maniac. The physicians of greatest reputation in the University of Louvain were consulted, and after having vainly employed all the remedies their skill could suggest, unanimously declared, that no further hopes were to be entertained of the cure of the invalid. Having passed thus many years in continual distress and with most edifying resignation to the will of God, Mary received the news of the happy death of John, her nephew, which took place in Rome on the 13th of August, 1621; she was also informed of the miracles which God wrought by his intercession, and of the relic of the heart, which had been brought from Rome to Louvain. In consequence, the desire of miraculously recovering her health was aroused within her; and having procured an image of her dear nephew, she

placed it devoutly beside her bed. The disease nevertheless, so far from giving way, increased beyond measure, and the pious lady prepared herself for death by the reception of the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. When reduced to this state, she one night thought she saw the servant of God, who, stretching forth his right arm from the image, and as it were approaching her with a countenance full of love and pity, said to her: "You, dear aunt, shall be free from your infirmity." On hearing this, she rallied, and promised in token of gratitude to her benefactor, to present to our College in Louvain a heart of wax, and two torches also of virgin wax; and she found herself perfectly cured. She fulfilled her vow, and before the Parish Priest of Saint Sulpice of the city of Diest she deposed on oath to the whole fact of her miraculous cure.\*

A little daughter of the nobleman Everard Pipenpay having been attacked by a violent and malignant fever, her mother had recourse to the intercession of John: and in a very short time the good parents obtained the favor they desired. So also, a youth named Sixtus, the son of Mr. Vander Laen, who was brought to the very point of death under the force of a

\* *Ex deposit. iurata in oppido Diest; et ex Proc. Ordin. Antuerp.*

raging fever, recovered his health instantaneously, by lighting two candles before the image of John, and reciting a few prayers in his honor.\*

Rainer Hautmans, a student of theology in the College of Louvain, at the commencement of the Easter vacation in the year 1623, fell dangerously ill. His sickness growing worse every day, by good chance he happened to be present, when Father Leonard Lessius was reading some letters which had just arrived from Rome, in which it was related, how the servant of God, John Berchmans, had after his death, aided his clients with miraculous favors, and that the Sovereign Pontiff Gregory XV. had given orders that juridical investigations should be made regarding his life and virtues. On hearing this, he felt springing up in his heart a firm confidence of obtaining by this means a speedy cure, and that too so as not to disarrange his studies. He promised John to be singularly devout to him, and recommended himself to him with ardent affection. He was heard according to his desires; for on the morning of the Monday after Low Sunday, on which day the schools are resumed, he recovered on the instant, and was able to prosecute his studies with the others as before.†

\* Ex attestat. in Proc. Ordin. Antuerpien.

† Ex attestat. *Ibid.*

It was perhaps this favor which gave courage to Andrew Van Boeregen to seek a similar one for himself. In the October of the same year, 1623, he was seized in Louvain with a fever, which becoming tertian, was gradually wasting his strength. He too had recourse to John, and promised to recite every day five Paters and Aves before his image. Having pronounced his vow with great tenderness of affection, which caused him to shed abundant tears, he fell into a placid sleep, and as soon as he awoke, he knew that he was entirely cured. He presented himself before the ecclesiastical tribunal, and deposed upon oath to the favor received.\*

Father Anthony de Greef, also a religious of the Society, escaped, thanks to the Blessed John, not from sickness, but from imminent danger of being imprisoned or put to death. He was a missionary apostolic in the United Provinces of Holland, and was exercising the sacred ministry in Nimega, while that city was occupied by a strong garrison of heretics, who through hatred to religion were hunting down Catholic priests. Being obliged one night to go out of the house, whether to assist a sick person, or for some other urgent necessity of his office, I am unable to say; he fell in with a

\* Ex attestat. in Proc. Ordin. Antuerpien.

heretic soldier, who, recognizing him for what he was, grasped him suddenly by the arm, and threatened to bring him as a prisoner before the officer on duty. In this strait the Father could do nothing else than raise his mind to God, and place himself under the protection of John Berchmans, whom he invoked interiorly with great confidence. At that very moment a young man of most beautiful aspect, who in his features was Berchmans himself, made his appearance, and turning to the soldier, with a firm voice, said to him: "let go this man, for he is a good citizen;" and the assailant left him free, and took his departure. The Father was desirous of thanking his noble benefactor, but much as his eye searched for him about the public square in which he was, he could see no one. He then continued on his way, thanking God and his Servant, and afterwards testified before the Bishop of Ruremonde to what had happened to him on that occasion.\*

I conclude by citing another attestation, which I find in the Roman ordinary Process: "We, the municipal authorities of the city of Diest in Brabant, and in the arch-diocese of Mechlin, at the instance of the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus in Louvain, attest that the devout lady, Anna Vlaeyen, aged about

\* *Ex attestat. Episcopi Ruremondens.*

seventy-five years, appeared before us, and upon oath declared, that sixty years before, some lads having met together in the house of her parents, Philip Vlaeyen and Catharine Vanpantegen, situated opposite the convent of the Cenobites, as they were gathering powder to load some pieces of artillery, it happened that a quantity of it, which had been placed in a corner of a room near the kitchen, and over which hung an image of the Venerable John Berchmans of the Society of Jesus, accidentally took fire, and greatly damaged the whole house. The passage leading to the room came down in pieces, as well as the walls, and the ceiling above. The window-frames were wrenched from their places, and every pane of glass was broken; the pewter plates and all the copper vessels that were in the kitchen, were thrown to the ground, and all the images in that room, ruined and shattered, except that of the Blessed John Berchmans, which, though hanging immediately above the powder, still remained suspended by a cord to the wall, and without sustaining any injury. And what is still more wonderful is, that a servant of Mr. Van Budinghen, who happened to be in the same room, was thrown to the ground and taken thence as dead, after those of the house had extinguished with beer the fire which was

near his clothes; and the same accident happened to a maid-servant who was going up stairs carrying in her hands some bottles of beer. But neither the one nor the other suffered any harm either then or afterwards. All of which things were always regarded both by those then present and by others who afterwards heard them related, in the light of a miracle, wrought through the intercession and merits of the Venerable John Berchmans. And in testimony of the truth we have ordered that this attestation be subscribed by one of our Secretaries, and be authenticated with our seal, this 13th day of February, 1742."\*

## CHAPTER VII.

### *His special protection of Virgins consecrated to God.*

The protection of the Blessed John extended to Virgins consecrated to God has been at all times extraordinary. Numerous are the favors conferred by him upon them: and I would protract this life to an unusual length, were I to relate merely those which have been authenticated by public documents and deposed to under oath in the various Processes. I shall

\* Relat. compuls. in Proc. Ordin. Roman.



select only a few, which I shall arrange, not according to their date or their nature, but consulting rather variety for the greater interest of the reader.

Sister Mary Perpetua Ruis, Oblate in the Monastery of Torre di Specchi at Rome, in the year 1623, had been for a month confined to her bed with a constant fever, and so far was she from hoping soon to be freed from it, that she had made up her mind to continue in the same condition until God would relieve her. However, she experienced some grief that she was not able to keep the lent or apply to her ordinary duties in the monastery. It opportunely occurred to her to implore the intercession of the Blessed John Berchmans, one of whose relics she had; and at the same time she wrote to Father Virgil Cepari, Rector of the Roman College, entreating him kindly to recommend her to the Servant of God, with whom he had been so intimate and influential, as his superior and confessor. The Father replied that he would do so with great pleasure. The result is given in her own words: "The following morning, at the time the fever usually seized me, I began and continued for three hours to perspire: I then arose from bed, and found myself in perfect health and without any fever." She continues to say that she was able, as she

desired, to observe the lent very strictly and to perform all the duties and austerities prescribed by her rule.\*

"The truth is," deposes Sister Catharine Giacinta Sacripante, a religious of the Monastery of St. Bernard, in the city of Narni, "that for about two years and a half I was subject to a flow of humors from the head, which falling upon my breast caused me continual and excessive pain; and two months afterwards, in the beginning of autumn, I was seized with a dry and constant cough which lasted during the winters of 1663 and 1664. In the spring my continued coughing abated, but the pain in my chest constantly increased. In the autumn of 1664 my cough returned with renewed vehemence, so as to excite apprehensions in those that heard it, and frequently caused me to vomit with very great pain and danger of bursting a blood-vessel. Besides this, my fever, attended with other maladies, was almost continual. My physicians having employed many remedies to no purpose, were of opinion that my life must soon terminate. During the years 1664 and 1665 the above maladies oppressed me still more. The following summer, I felt a little better than usual; but at the end of the succeeding September, my sickness returned

\* Attestat. MSS. autogr.

with greater violence than during the preceding year. The nuns, seeing my malady so serious and dangerous, exhorted me to place myself in the hands of a physician; but having derived little advantage from medicines the previous year, I was not disposed to submit myself again to their trial. Hearing from Francesca Maria Bucciarelli, a professed nun, some details of the life of the great Servant of God, John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, who died with the reputation of sanctity, I suddenly experienced a particular devotion and desire to have a picture of the Servant of God. On the vigil of Saint Ursula, the 20th of last October, the Canon Bucciarelli gave a picture of the Servant of God to Francesca Maria, his aunt, who immediately came to see me. Unable to remain in bed, on account of my cough, asthma and fever, I was sitting in the sacristy, at the same time suffering from a temptation such as I had never experienced in my sickness. It seemed to me that neither God nor the Saints were willing to confer any favor upon me. I did not wish to look at the picture, but upon being importuned by the nun, I took it in my hands with great impatience, and uttered these very words: 'If it be true that the Servant of God, John Berchmans, is in Heaven, and enjoys the glory of God, as it is said, let him

obtain for me the favor to recover from my sickness; if he do not, I do not believe it.' Being reproved by Maria Francesca for speaking in this manner, I replied: 'Do what you please; as for me, I do not believe in him, if he give me not this grace.' Wonderful to relate! In an instant I was free from my cough, my fever, my pain in the breast, and from every malady, and I began at once to get ready for matins and continued to perform all the regular exercises and duties of one in perfect health."\*

Maria Angela Guinigi, a professed religious in the Monastery of St. John of Lucca, suffered for about three years such weakness and nausea of stomach, that she was unable to retain any food. Physicians of the highest repute being called in consultation, seeing that all their remedies could not overcome the violence of the disease, unanimously declared that her case was desperate. But apart from this, her debility having reduced her to so emaciated a condition that she looked like a mere skeleton, she herself had no longer any hopes of being cured by human remedies. She was in this state on the 13th of August, 1672, when hearing the Mother infirmarian read the life of the Blessed John Berchmans and reflecting that

\* *Ex Proc. Narnien. in Ordinar. Rom. compuls. pag. 636.*

it was the anniversary of his happy departure from this world, she turned towards a picture of the Servant of God, which was hanging near her bed, and said to him: "What would it cost thee, O blessed Father, to restore me my health, if it be the will of God?"

"Uttering these words," she subjoins in her juridical deposition, "I felt a firm confidence without any doubt of obtaining the favor. This I had not experienced at other times, though I frequently recommended myself to different Saints. Nor was my hope frustrated; for, towards sunset, I felt an inclination to leave my bed for half an hour, as was my custom on other days; but scarcely had I touched the floor, when I felt that I was not in my usual state of debility, but rather very vigorous, and I perceived that I suffered very little. Meanwhile, I put on my dress, and finding myself always getting better, and that the pain which had afflicted me for the space of three years, had entirely disappeared, I felt a desire to go to the church, in which the religious were at that time assembled; but I was advised not to trust myself, and to be content with going to an oratory, which was near at hand. I did so, and remained kneeling for half an hour without the least inconvenience. Unable to refrain from announcing my recovery to the other sisters, an hour

afterwards, I ran to a little chapel of the Blessed Virgin, where a large number of the nuns were assembled, and to reach it, I had to ascend four flights of stairs—this I did with the greatest ease and without the slightest inconvenience. Entering the chapel, I said to all, that I was cured, and did not feel any pain. At this sight the Mother Prioress ordered me to intone in a loud voice, the *Te Deum laudamus*, which was continued by the other nuns with indescribable joy, all returning thanks to the Blessed Virgin and her most faithful Servant. The following day I joined in all the exercises of the community, and have continued ever since in excellent health, without perceiving the slightest trace of my former sickness. My physicians have testified, that it was absolutely impossible for me to recover my health by any human means."\*

A religious of the venerable Monastery of our Lady at Tournon, in France, was instantaneously freed from a more serious malady on the 29th of September, in the year 1740. Mary Frances di Monteils was for a long time a great sufferer from paralysis, which extended to her whole body, and prevented its free use. Not

\* This miraculous cure is attested in the Ordinary Process of Lucca, by six eye-witnesses, of whom one was the person healed, and two were the physicians attending her. Proc. Ordin. Rem. compuls. pages 646, et seq.

only was she unable to leave her chamber, but she could not even rise from her bed, or perform any action without the assistance of another. There was no remedy which she did not try; but so far from experiencing any relief, she remained only more enfeebled. The physicians who attended her no longer entertained any hope of her cure, and announced that no resource was left her save in the protection of heaven. Some years previously, Sister Monteils had read the life of the angelic youth the Blessed John Berchmans, and had conceived for him a very high esteem. Then passing from admiration to confidence, it came into her mind that he was to be her deliverer. On the 26th of September, 1740, after having received holy communion, this thought made a still deeper impression on her mind, and she regarded it as an inspiration from heaven. Hence she very earnestly entreated the nuns to unite with her in making a novena in honor of the Servant of God. All consented, and on the 29th of the same month the novena began with a general communion. The same day the Blessed Sacrament was carried to the sick nun, who received it seated in an arm-chair, because she had not strength to support herself on her knees; and full of unusual fervor she recited a most devout supplication to the Blessed John, which she

promised to renew every day ; and finally with the permission of her confessor, obliged herself by vow to fast on the vigil, and to communicate on the anniversary of the Servant of God. This she promised to do for ten years, if she obtained the favor which she asked. From that time forward she thought of nothing else but of invoking frequently the Blessed John, and while these thoughts occupied her mind, she perceived that some extraordinary change was taking place within her. She continued all the morning in this state ; afterwards returning to her normal condition, she found herself oppressed with sleep, and had herself placed in bed, where, after a short prayer, she enjoyed a placid slumber. Awakening soon after, she felt as if a new vigor were diffused through her whole frame. She immediately arose from her bed, and ran to her kneeling-bench to return thanks to God for the change which she experienced in herself. Her astonishment had almost bereft her of her senses; nevertheless, fearing that she was deluded by a disturbed imagination, and that her cure was not real, she returned to bed, and arose from it several times; until evidently seeing that she had recovered the use of her paralyzed limbs, and that in moving her body, she suffered no pain, transported with joy and gratitude, she went



from her chamber, and hurriedly ran to the place where the sisters were assembled, to give them the news of her miraculous cure. Upon first seeing her the sisters were confounded, as if unwilling to believe the testimony of their own eyes; soon, however, recovering from their perplexity, they all cried out with a loud voice: "*A miracle!*" and with the sick nun in their midst, they immediately repaired to the church, where shedding copious tears of tenderness, they returned, as best they could, due thanks to God, who, in such a manner had vouchsafed to exalt the merits of his Servant John Berchmans. The news soon spread throughout the city; and a multitude of relations, friends, and people of every rank and condition came for several days to the monastery, desiring to see with their own eyes the wonders of God, which were afterwards confirmed by many eye-witnesses, examined juridically by Monsignor Alexander Milon, Bishop and Count of Valentia.\*

Sister Claudia Regina Cellard, in the year 1756, was ill of a fever in the same monastery at Tournon. Though for several months she was subjected to every variety of treatment by her physicians, her malady so far from improving, became more aggravated; while in course of time, headaches, difficulty of breathing, vio-

\* Ex Proc. Ordin. Valentia.

lent fits of vomiting and other very serious and dangerous symptoms followed in rapid succession. Not a ray of hope for her recovery being left, the good religious directed all her thoughts to her soul; and having received the last sacraments on the 16th of October, she asked that the prayers for the dying should be recited, in order to prepare herself for her departure from this life. At this time a Father of the Society of Jesus came to see her, and suggested that she should have recourse to the intercession of the Blessed John Berchmans. The physician also arrived, who, hearing of her recurrence to the Servant of God, declared, that if she were cured it would be by a manifest miracle. Upon the departure of the physician, the sick nun asked for a relic of John, which was immediately brought. All the religious who had assembled to unite in recommending her soul to God, knelt down to pray, Sister Claudia in the meantime applying the relic to the parts of her body which were suffering from her infirmities. To apply the relic and to be cured, were one and the same thing. At the news of this miracle, the physician repaired without delay to the monastery and saw his patient, who was now cured, and vigorous and strong with the other religious in the choir was returning thanks to God.\*

\* *Rx. Relat. MSS.*

Not inferior to the former cure, both in regard to the serious nature of her disease and the suddenness of her recovery, was the following event, which I transcribe word for word from the authentic relation now in my hands. Maria Teodora Omaccini, born in Florence, and a choir nun in the Monastery of St. Joseph in the city of Castello, about the year 1731, and in the 21st year of her age, began to be afflicted with various and complicated infirmities, which terminated in consumption, joined with a violent coughing, spitting of blood and continued fever. Although nothing was left undone to arrest so many maladies, by the application of remedies the best adapted and most efficacious which art and experience could employ; notwithstanding, all were of no avail; for the sick person continued for nine successive years to grow worse, suffering from pains in the head and breast, difficulty of breathing, convulsions, loss of appetite and sleep, together with extreme debility, particularly in the knees. Hence, the physicians regarded her as incurable, saying that she had reached the last stage of consumption. It happened, that while Father Valeriani of the Society of Jesus, was preaching in 1750 in the same monastery, and was fervently recommending to the religious devotion to the Blessed John Berchmans, Maria Teodora

felt in her heart a very lively confidence of obtaining, through the intercession of this immaculate youth, the grace of recovery which she desired. For this purpose, she resolved on the 4th of April of the same year to make a devout novena to the Servant of God. When the novena commenced, and during its progress, instead of getting better, her malady constantly grew worse. However, receiving a relic of her venerable patron from Father Dominic Ottolini, Rector of the College, she heard, as it were, an internal voice which said to her. "When you shall have been touched with my relic, you shall be healed." Upon this her respiration became still more impeded, her fever increased, and the sick person was reduced to extremities. The physician, to give her some relief, wished to minister new remedies to her; but reviving her faith, she refused them, and sent to the abbess, requesting her to come quickly and apply the relic of the Venerable Servant of God, feeling certain that, without the aid of human remedies, she would instantaneously recover her health. And such in reality was the case: for upon the application of the relic an unusual healthy vigor ran through all her frame. Not doubting her cure, she exclaimed: "I am healed: the Blessed John Berchmans has done me the favor." Say-

ing this, she arose from her bed, dressed herself without assistance, and went with the other religious to the church to return solemn thanksgiving to God. The same day, the 14th of April, she dined with the other religious in the common refectory, went up and down the most inconvenient stairways of the Monastery, nor had she anything ever afterwards to suffer from her former ailments.\*

Let us turn now to the monasteries of Rome, where the Angelic Youth, in preference, perhaps, to any other place, showered his blessings from heaven. And first, we must speak of two remarkable miracles which occurred one after the other in the Monastery of St. Ann, then occupied by the religious of the Order of St. Benedict, who were afterwards transferred to that of Campus Martius. Juridical informations and testimonies were taken regarding these two events in the Processes formed by episcopal and apostolic authority. My narration would be long, were I to relate all the minute circumstances as they took place. I will rather, therefore, give a compendium of the events.

Maria Costanza Chiaramonti, by more than

\* Besides the authentic relation confirmed by the religious, as eye-witnesses of this miraculous cure, we have the opinions of two physicians, who successively attended the sick nun during the course of her malady.

seven years of continued sickness, had been reduced to so emaciated a condition and to such an exhaustion of natural vigor, that unable to stand on her feet, she was compelled either to lie in bed or to pass entire days seated in a chair. Her malady was not merely of one kind, but a strange complication of various ailments, which attacked her at one time singly, at another time with their united strength. She suffered from deafness and a ringing in the ears; from headache and softening of the brain; from colics and a twisting of the bowels; from the heart-disease; from violent contortions of the limbs; finally, from deadly fits and a total loss of motion, especially in the arms, knees, and withered lower extremities. The many remedies applied to her case, in so long-continued an illness, were of no avail except to prolong the exercise of her patience; and she had already tranquilized her mind and prepared herself to suffer until death, without any hope of relief from her miseries. However, seated one day in her chair, she heard Sister Maria Ignazia Mauri, who was also ill, speak at length of the angelic life of the Blessed John Berchmans, and conceived a great devotion towards him, and a lively confidence in his intercession. But as her maladies, far from diminishing, were daily increased she lost

heart, and relented much in her fervor. The Servant of God appeared several times in a dream to Sister Mauri, and ordered her to admonish Sister Costanza to renew her devotion, if she wished to receive the grace which she had asked. The admonition produced a good effect. She revived her confidence in the Servant of God, began to read his life, and noticing that he was born on the 13th of March, the very day when she renewed her fervor, she said: "O great Servant of God, will you not grant me the desired favor on this your birthday?" The same evening, towards sunset, seated in her chair, she asked the religious, who were present, to place her on her bed. They raised her accordingly, she herself being powerless; but in the act of laying her on the bed, she fell with her face downwards, and appeared like a dead person, all her limbs being rigid. She was for a time motionless and insensible, and seemed momentarily about to expire. "Then, (continues the narration in the very words which, after her cure, the sick nun employed in the Process,) the other Sisters began to recall to my mind the confidence which I had felt in the Servant of God. They brought me one of his pictures, and placed it upon my spine: I immediately felt a certain twittering in my lower extremities, while at the same time,

I could not say how, my right arm was extended, though still continuing rigid. At this unexpected change, the nuns yet more confidently hoped to obtain my cure, and therefore recited three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys, in honor of the Blessed Trinity, praying the Servant of God to complete the favor. I was moved and consoled by the confidence which the nuns manifested in the Servant of God. Either while saying those prayers, or after them, they laid the picture on my breast, and I immediately extended both my arms, and was able with them to press the picture to my heart. Their confidence still increasing, they placed the picture below my breast, that motion and vigor might return to the upper portion of my body, and at the same time they applied a small piece of linen dipped in the blood of the Servant of God. At this moment, I felt perfectly free to move and to turn myself at pleasure. I could also sit in my bed without assistance. They then repeated the same prayers, and touched my knees with the picture and the linen; after which I was bid to rise, they removing at the same time my chair: but the truth was, that my lower limbs had not yet been healed, and I would have fallen upon the floor, if I had not been supported in the arms of the nuns. I therefore remained sitting in



my chair. At the same time it occurred to me that perhaps my confidence was rather presumption, in wishing to obtain all the favors at once, and on the day which I myself had selected. I humbled myself—I resigned myself to the divine will. The nuns who were present then said that my knees should again be touched in the same manner. This they did, and consigning into my hands the picture of Venerable Berchmans, said to me with great confidence: ‘Arise now, you are cured.’ I arose, supported by the nuns, and being well balanced on my feet, at that moment I experienced a great vigor in my knee and leg, so that, extending my foot to make the first step, I said that they should leave me, for I was cured. In fact I felt perfectly restored and free from all my former maladies. The nuns left me to my own efforts, and I began to move myself and walk briskly with the same freedom and vigor that I now possess. I went immediately to thank the Blessed Sacrament. Afterwards I repaired to the refectory in sight of all the religious, who were overwhelmed with astonishment. I bore in my hand the picture of my deliverer. The following morning the *Te Deum* was sung in choir by all the nuns, by order of the Mother Abbess.\*” Such are her own words. This miraculous cure occurred March 13, 1729.

\* Ex Proc. Ordin. Apost.

Two months had not passed, when the joy and thanksgiving of the same monastery were renewed by the cure of Sister Maria Ignazia Mauri. She had been seriously indisposed for three years, having finally lost the use of her voice, and her arms, which were contracted. After Sister Costanza Chiaramonti had obtained her cure, in which sister Ignazia had a great share, the latter was ordered by her confessor to recommend herself to the intercession of the Blessed John Berchmans, who had so often appeared to her, and towards whom she entertained a very tender devotion. She obeyed, and upon the application of his relics was instantaneously healed. "The 3d of May, 1729," thus deposes Marcus Antonius Rossetti, a physician, "I visited her about four o'clock, and having prescribed bleeding the following morning, in order to relieve the contraction of the arms, I departed. Being recalled about an hour afterwards, I found the religious suffering from a contraction of her lower extremities, attended with convulsive motions, like those in the arms, together with shortness and difficulty of respiration, so that she was unable to swallow a drop of water. Seeing that all human skill was powerless in her case, and the sick person, though unable to speak, manifesting a desire to see her confessor, I advised the reli-

gious to send for him without delay, as there was danger of her dying of suffocation, her pulse being also very bad; and I promised to return that evening to see if she were able to take any remedies. I returned at six o'clock, and meeting the Father Confessor, as I was about entering the door of the Monastery, I was told by him that Sister Maria Ignazia had been cured through the intercession of the Servant of God, John Berchmans, and that she was then going into the choir to return thanks to our Lord. After a short time, Sister Maria Ignazia with all the religious, related to me the miracle performed by the Servant of God, John Berchmans, with the touch of his picture and of a small piece of linen dipped in his blood, by which applications an instantaneous cure had been effected, leaving the patient free from all pain and debility. I remained for some time rapt in astonishment, knowing that I had left the patient in a most dangerous condition, and with but little hopes of recovery."\*

Maria Anna Girelli, a religious of the Maestre Pie, at Rome, in the school, called all 'Arco de' Ginnasi, was the victim, for some years, of most violent convulsions and contractions of the nerves. In the June of 1731, these maladies increased to such a degree that they became

\* *Ex Proc. Ordin. et Apost.*

insupportable, both on account of the frequency with which they assailed her, and the pains and spasms which they caused throughout her entire frame. Having been advised by Father John Charles Senepa, of the Society of Jesus, to have recourse to the intercession of John Berchmans, she began a novena, and imposed upon herself to visit daily the tomb of the Servant of God, and when she was unable to do so on account of her sickness, to send thither in her place one of her religious Sisters. Towards the conclusion of the novena, her malady was much augmented, and for five successive hours, she endured the pangs of death, her whole person being contracted and drawn up, and her respiration so slight and difficult, that it merely indicated that life was not extinct. In this utter prostration of her system, it seemed to her that she saw before her a member of the Society of Jesus, a youth of most beautiful countenance, who said to her: "Well! this is the last time that you shall suffer from this malady; the grace is already obtained; send for Father Senepa, for I wish him to be present." The Father came, bringing with him a relic of the Servant of God, which, while reciting some few prayers, he applied several times to the sick nun. "Then," she subjoins in her account of the cure, "as if aroused from

a profound sleep, (but in reality I am certain that I did not sleep,) shedding tears, I extended my arms and said: 'Yes, my venerable patron, I will do so; I will begin from this day to read your life. Give me my dress—I wish to clothe myself; I am free from all my ailments.' All the by-standers testify that I spoke thus: although I do not remember what I said or where I was, I can only say what I conjecture and believe to be certain. I again saw the Jesuit youth standing before me, and I certainly knew that it was the Blessed John Berchmans. He kindly reproved me for the tepidity of my life; but in so earnest a manner that he excited in me a great sorrow, which I still retain, for my past defects. He commanded me to read every day a small part of his life and to put it in practice, never to omit my mental prayer, the great advantages of which he praised, and finally added: 'Well! this is the last day of your sickness, and you shall be delivered from it.' All this I certify, on oath, it appeared to me that I saw and heard. My dress was placed in my hands; I arose, and felt as strong as if I had never been unwell. From that time forward my convulsions did not return, and I always enjoyed perfect health."\*

On the first of June, 1745, three daughters of

\* Ex attestat. authent.

Monsieur Digne, Consul of France, entered as pupils the Monastery of the Ursulines at Rome. The second of these children, aged about six or seven years and Theresa by name, besides having an issue on one of her arms, was afflicted with ulcers on both ears which constantly emitted a putrid matter, whose odor was insupportable. Placed under the care of Sister Ursula del Crocifisso, a lay-sister, the latter suggested that the child should recommend herself to the Blessed John Berchmans. The obedient pupil consequently recited every day some few prayers to the Servant of God, at the end of which she added: "If it be the will of God, cure my ears." In the meantime the malady constantly increased and from the ear extended to the nostrils. The most experienced physicians and surgeons were consulted, who, after employing all the remedies of art, finally came to the conclusion that the malady was altogether incurable. The good lay-sister then exhorted the child to place still greater confidence in the intercession of the Servant of God. On the morning of the 3d of May, 1745, having recited her customary prayers, the little sufferer felt impressed with lively sentiments of devotion and confidence, and begged the Sister Infirmarian to touch her ears and forehead with the relics of the Blessed Berch-

mans. This was done. At their touch the issue was immediately closed, her lost hearing was restored and the child perfectly cured, continued afterward to enjoy uninterrupted health: as the following witnesses attest upon oath: The Superioress Maria Adelaide Roffeni, Sisters Joseph di Middebborg, Saveria Spezzani, Lanora della Torre, Eleanora Saracinelli, Clara Deva, Costante Isabella Alippi, Victoria Ossoli, Agnes Ressè, Louisa Schiantanelli, Cassandra Depuis, Serafina Buzi, Ursula del Crocifisso, all Ursuline religious.\*

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Wonderful favors conferred upon every class of persons.*

Muzio Cittadini, a native of Sienna and a notary by profession, while at Rome in the September of 1621, was attacked by a most violent fever attended with rather dangerous symptoms. A relative of the sick man, Donna Ersilia Altissimi by name, informed of the fact, immediately repaired to the church of the Roman College, and prayed for a considerable time for his recovery, inspired by the confidence which the extraordinary favor she had

\* Ex attestat. authent.

already received through the intercession of the Venerable John Berchmans, gave to her petitions. Having returned home, she is met by the wife of Muzio, who, with serene countenance and joyful heart, informs her that the patient is not only out of danger, but instantaneously cured, she knows not how, nor by whom. But upon remarking the hour and moment of the cure, it was found to have occurred at the very time in which the intercession of the Servant of God was implored. Hence it was, that on the same day the entire family of Muzio, together with Donna Ersilia, went to return thanks to God, and to offer two candles, as was then customary, to be burned before the sepulchre of the Venerable John.\*

In the October of the same year, 1621, Magdalene Navarra, a Roman young lady, twenty-two years of age, was cured in a like miraculous manner. For three months she was compelled to keep her bed on account of an obstinate contraction of the nerves, which caused her the most frightful spasms. "Having," says she in her sworn deposition, "used to little or no purpose the various remedies recommended by physicians, and particularly by Signor Luigi Ramino, I recurred to the devout intercession of a Father of the Society of Jesus, called

\* Proc. Ordin. Roman. fol. 218, 270, 271, 273.



Father John, a native of Flanders, who, I learned, had died on the 13th of August, 1621, with the reputation of great sanctity. A student of the Roman College, named Julius Scallano, a relative of mine, had given me a piece of the habit of the aforesaid Father, and through devotion I put it around my neck, earnestly recommending myself to the same blessed Father, and suddenly I commenced to feel better and was entirely cured, and returned to my former state of life, and never since have I been afflicted with the same miseries; and I attribute all to God through the intercession of the aforesaid holy Father, and I therefore return thanks for this favor, and I recommend myself to his intercession, I venerate his image and revere his relics as holy, and I know that he has performed many and various miracles in favor of those who recommend themselves to his intercession."\*

Aloysius Riccardi, Rector of the Church of St. Antony in the city of Corneto, in the year 1621, fell sick of a fever, which for more than a month continued to waste his strength, and which was accompanied by very severe asthma and difficulty of breathing. The physicians, to whose care he was entrusted, seeing all the skill of their art unavailable, began to despair not only of his cure, but even of his life. The sick

\* Proc. Ordin. Rom. fol. 326.

man himself lost hope, especially when in September of the same year, he was seized with an extremely violent attack, accompanied with dangerous symptoms and deadly swoons. ✓ At this time a letter was brought to him from his nephew, Gregory by name, who was studying at Rome in the College of the Society of Jesus; but not being able to read the letter, through the violence of his pains, he held it in his hand, and at the same time felt that his fever abated and that great joy swelled his heart. He wished to open the letter, and finding within it a small piece of a black garment, he unfolded it contemptuously, under the impression that his nephew had procured for him a new cassock of the cloth, of which a sample had been sent. His sufferings however continuing to be relieved, while at the same time he experienced internal consolation of soul, and not being able to divine the cause, he finally read the letter, which was couched in these terms: "Father John of Flanders, a member of the Society of Jesus, died in our College here at Rome on the 13th of last August, with the reputation of sanctity; and when his body was carried into the church, there was a large concourse of people, who came to see him and to obtain some of his relics; and this piece of his habit fell to my lot, which I inclose in this letter, to your

Reverence." But the most remarkable of all was, that upon finishing the reading of the letter, the sick man was perfectly well, and rising without delay from his bed, walked through the city to the astonishment and amazement of every one. Moreover in his juridical deposition, he added that by means of that little relic many graces were operated by the Almighty, in the same city, through the intercession of John, and that to testify his gratitude he willingly repaired to Rome and suspended at the sepulchre of the Servant of God, a votive tablet in which all the circumstances of his extraordinary cure were accurately represented.\*

In the usual Roman Process, Santa Sperandino, the wife of Octavius Sabaudi, residing in Penna, in the diocese of Amelia, thus testifies regarding herself: "On the 15th of July, 1622, being confined to my bed by erysipelas in the face, attended with fever and excessive pains in the head—on account of which, I could not endure the sound of persons walking in the street—and my pains and fever increasing to such a degree that I almost despaired of my life, and besides a flow of blood unexpectedly following with such violence as to make me like a dying person, (such indeed was the opi-

\* Proc. Ord. Rom. fol. 310, 315, 319.

nion of my physician, Peter Felice, when he came to visit me;) my mother brought with her to my house a picture of Father John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, who died, on the 13th of August, 1621, in the Roman College, with the reputation of a saint, and who performed many miracles; and she advised me to recommend myself to his intercession, which when I had done, and placed his picture on my head, I suddenly felt myself free from my headache; and, a few days afterwards, cured of my infirmity, I arose from bed as if I had never been sick. And for the above grace attained by the intercession of the aforesaid Father John I placed a votive tablet together with his picture where the body of the above Father remains in the Roman College."\*

In like manner, by the mere application of a relic of the blessed youth, Dorotea Grisalli, of the district of Palo, and diocese of Bari in the Neapolitan Kingdom, was cured of a most violent headache which during fifteen days almost deprived her of reason, and hurried her to the excesses of one under the influence of madness. In consequence of the favor which she had received, she entertained so great confidence in the intercession of the Servant of God, that she recurred to him alone in all her necessities.

\* Proc. Ord. Rom. fol. 309, 322, 324.

A dangerous cancer appearing in her leg, she was unwilling to obtain the services of a physician or a surgeon. She applied to the diseased part the relic of John; the tumor suddenly disappeared, and she was entirely healed, as she herself testifies upon oath in the Process which was drawn up in 1626.\*

Lucretia Pettorelli, a Roman, had upon one of her knees a tumor of so genuine a character, that it caused her the most intense pain. She could not make the least motion without great inconvenience, nor was she able to endure the slightest touch. Hearing, after some time, that one of her relations had been recently restored to health through the intercession of the venerable John Berchemans, she cared not for medicines or physicians, and had herself carried, as well as she could, to the sepulchre of the venerable Servant of God in the church of the Roman College. When there, with bare knees she placed herself on the marble slab, and having made a short prayer, arose without pain and speedily returned home free from all suffering.†

One of the legs of Julia Drosolini, likewise a Roman, was in a still worse condition. By a strange contraction of the nerves, she had be-

\* Proc. Ordin. Palen. in Roman.compuls.

† Rx attestat. authent.

come a cripple. She could neither move herself, nor walk, without the assistance of another. With all her heart she recommended herself to the protection of the venerable John Berchmans promising, if cured, to carry as a mark of gratitude, a leg of silver to his tomb. Her prayer being finished, she immediately received the desired favor, and went herself the same day to the church and fulfilled her vow.\*

Lady Angela Filisboni, the wife of Signor Giulio de Giulii, a Roman, towards the end of April, 1729, was attacked by hysterics, to which from time to time she was subject. On this occasion, however, their violence was very great; for besides suffering from difficulty of respiration and palpitation of the heart, her throat was so compressed that for eighteen successive days she was unable to take any food, and found herself reduced to the utmost debility. No remedy availing, she sent for the Curate of S. Maria di Trastevere, her Confessor, to administer to her the last sacraments. He, seeing the condition of the sick lady, returned home for a picture of the Blessed John Berchmans which he possessed, and visiting immediately his penitent, made with the image the sign of the Cross three times over her, putting his confidence in the intercession of the Servant of God. The lady

\* *Ex attestat. authent.*

at the same moment recovered her strength, and exclaimed: "I am cured, and the Venerable Berchmans has conferred on me this favor." And such was really the case; for, free from all pain, she left her bed, as strong as she ever was, and what was more remarkable, she never afterwards suffered from the same infirmity.\*

Still nearer his end was a youth of twenty-two years of age, named Peter Spadoni, a pupil of the College of Salviati, at Rome. An artery in his breast having burst on the 8th of September, 1742, he began and continued for eight entire days to vomit blood in very great quantity. Abandoned by the physicians, he received the last Sacraments, and with great piety prepared himself to pass from this life. The prayers of the dying were being recited for his soul, when it was opportunely suggested by one of his companions that he should recommend himself to the Blessed John Berchmans, whom God at that time was glorifying by astounding miracles. The sick young man took in his hand a picture of the Servant of God, and kissing it several times, with tender affection, placed it upon his breast. A short time afterwards he fell asleep; and it appeared to him that he saw in a dream before him a youth of the Society, who with amiability expressed on his countenance, approached his bedside. The sufferer

\* *Ex attestat. authent.*

asked if it was the Venerable John Berchmans whom he saw, and, receiving an affirmative answer, begged with all possible earnestness that the Servant of God would obtain from the Almighty and from the Blessed Virgin the health of his body, now entirely despaired of by the physicians. The Servant of God replied: "Yes, my son, I will do so willingly." Hereupon the sick man awoke, and, to the astonishment of all, was perfectly cured. A few days afterwards, with all his companions, he proceeded to the Church of St. Ignatius, in order to receive holy communion, and to return thanks at the tomb of his heavenly preserver.

In proof of this fact we have the sworn depositions of Rev. Andrew Secci, Rector of the College of Salviati; of Fabricius Leandrini, infirmarian; of Cipriano Cipriani and Charles Cecchetti, pupils of the College; and of two physicians, whose authentic testimony I prefer in this place to give, copied from the original now in my hand.

"We, the undersigned, compelled by truth, testify, on oath, that being the ordinary physicians of the College of Salviati, we attended a pupil of the same College, named Peter Spadoni, who, from the 8th of last September, began to vomit very large quantities of blood, and continued to do so on the subsequent days until the evening of Saturday the 15th of the



same month; and as these sanguinary ejections were very copious and frequent, every available remedy which the medical art can supply in similarly dangerous maladies was brought into requisition, not only by having recourse to repeated bleedings, but also finally to the most powerful astringents—all, however, without any benefit or advantage; the malady even seemed constantly to increase. Its origin was discovered to be a very considerable rupture of an arterial vessel in the breast; this we conjectured from the frequency of the above-mentioned ejections of blood, (which on the 14th and 15th especially occurred even as often as four or five times a day, and as many during the night:) and from the frothy quality of the blood, and the excessive copiousness of these discharges from the mouth; for it was computed that he had thrown up no less than sixteen pounds of blood, besides the repeated bleedings prescribed in his case. For these reasons, and because all the remedies applied, as was said, were found useless, though efficacious in themselves, it was judged impossible to obtain his cure by any natural means. We were still further confirmed in this judgment when we saw him attacked still later by a fever so violent that in a few days it reduced the poor sufferer to extremities. Hence, it was that after he had received the last Sacraments,

he was advised to have recourse to the divine assistance, since no confidence could be placed in human aid. Such was his condition on Saturday, the 15th of September, when we left him in the hands of his Spiritual Fathers, who were of opinion that he was soon to pass to a better life. When we returned next day to the College, we heard to our great astonishment that the sick youth was cured: and, in fact, upon examining his pulse, we found him without fever; we observed that he spat up no blood, and, in fine, that he was entirely healed. It was on this occasion we learned that he had recovered instantaneously through the intercession of the Venerable John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus. Acknowledging that the above cure could not in any manner have been attributed to human remedies, we judged it expedient to suspend all treatment in order to see whether a permanent recovery had been effected. This we found to be the case; for from that up to the present time he has suffered no inconvenience from his former sickness. In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names, this 10th day of October, 1742.

“NICHOLAS MICHELANGELI, ordinary and principal Physician of the above-mentioned College.

“CHARLES MOCCHI, assistant Physician of the above-mentioned College.”

## CHAPTER IX.

*Miracles laid before the sacred Congregation of Rites, and approved by our holy Father, the Pope.*

Maria Angela Gilivet was born at Rome in March, 1717. She contracted from her parents, who both died a few months after her birth, so delicate and diseased a constitution, that through fear of approaching death, it was necessary without delay to administer to her the holy sacrament of baptism. God willed, however, that she should survive; but as she advanced in years, she gave manifest indications that her physical system was a prey to innumerable bad humors. From childhood she began to experience great weakness in her limbs, utter exhaustion of strength and difficulty of respiration. After a time her gums appeared swollen and pregnant with black and putrid blood, which gradually infected all her teeth, and her entire body was covered with livid spots, which soon took the form of pustules and running sores. Desiring most ardently to consecrate herself to God, she went from Rome to Nepi, and there entered the Monastery of St. Bernard, of the Cistercian order. The nuns refused to receive her on ac-

count of her feeble health; but afterwards convinced of the piety of the young lady, they cheerfully admitted her to the novitiate and to her profession. Her maladies were much increased by the tenor of the religious life, and she was subject to epileptic fits and convulsions, contractions of the nerves and tendons, lesions of the bones and paralysis of the limbs. In 1747, her left leg was contracted, and a few months afterwards also her right one, both being shortened by about three inches; and one of her ribs being moved from its natural position, was contracted, while its point entered near the breast. Two years from that time the poor sufferer was taken with most violent convulsions in all her limbs, followed by the almost entire loss of the use of her tongue and arms. Thus, with her most acute pains, she remained powerless to perform any duty of life. The physicians, to whose care she was intrusted, after having for many years uselessly employed all the remedies of their art, declared that Angela Maria was affected with scurvy in the highest degree, which therefore naturally could not be cured. In fact they ceased to apply other remedies and abandoned the case as desperate.

On the 12th of August, 1749, Rev. Angelo Milizia, ordinary Confessor of the Monastery,

related the deplorable condition of the patient to Monsignor Silvestri, Bishop of Nepi, who exhorted her to recommend herself to the intercession of Venerable John Berchmans, whom God had pleased to glorify in Ronciglione by a famous miracle, of which the Process had then been drawn up. In consequence of this advice the whole community united in fervent supplications to God, and Angela Maria conceived the firm confidence of obtaining her cure through the intercession of Venerable Berchmans. Nor was she mistaken, as the following narration of the fact taken from her own deposition in the Apostolic Process, will sufficiently tell: "About the vesper hour, which may have been two o'clock, on the 16th of August, after holy communion, I was seized, as usual, with convulsions, which ceased towards night. Having then taken in bed a slight refectio—such as is usually given to the sick—I placed upon my knees the picture of my Venerable John Berchmans, and if I may be permitted to say it, I entreated him with more faith than on the preceding days, to grant me health, if it were for the salvation of my soul, so that I might serve Jesus, my spouse, in this holy place, and not be so great a burden to the community and my sisters in religion. I then sweetly fell asleep and enjoyed a calm repose, which lasted about

seven hours, never during my life having slept so tranquilly and for so long a time. Next morning at sunrise, when the religious were going to matins, I awoke, and perceived that my limbs were completely unbent, that my neck was erect, and upon touching my left side, I found that my rib which had been very considerably raised, had returned to its natural position, and did not differ from the others. I felt that the pressure on my left shoulder had been removed, and that the arm attached to it was free and possessing its natural strength. At first, I thought that I was deluded by my imagination, but upon moving all the parts of my body, I felt persuaded that I had been miraculously healed, and without delay sprang from my bed as lightly as a feather. Finding myself well, and endowed with such strength as I never before had, while my gums were exempt from all humors; alone, without any assistance, I put on all my clothes, and experienced very great regret, that I had not made known the miracle to my sister, Innocenzia Gilivet, who slept in the same room, and had already gone to the choir; but when I was about to awake, it seemed to me that I was dreaming. After having clothed myself, I arose, made my bed and arranged every thing in my room. I then left it and went to a grate which was near the choir, while the religious were reciting

matins, for the purpose of hearing a mass which was offered at the altar of our Lady, opposite the above-mentioned grate. I might almost say that I flew from one place to the other. I heard the holy mass, affectionately thanking my Venerable John Berchmans, and I mentally repeated that I united myself with him, who was now in heaven, in thanking the most august Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin for the great miracle operated upon me through his intercession, which I had invoked. Meanwhile the Mother Abbess came out of the choir: I knelt before her, saying; 'A miracle, mother; I am perfectly cured through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, John Berchmans.' The Mother Abbess was astounded, and told me that I should thank God and the Venerable Berchmans: I replied that I had already done so in the Mass which I had just heard. Meanwhile the religious came out of the choir, and all were astonished at seeing me healed. Some of them wept, while others laughed, and each one endeavored to embrace me and rejoice with me. To give the whole community a proof of the miracle performed upon me, the same day I swept the kitchen, carried the wood and rang the bells, which sounded merrily on account of the approaching festival of our glorious St. Bernard." Such are her own words.\*

\* Proc. apost. Nepesin. fol. 183 et seq.

Not less extraordinary was the aid received from Heaven, through the intercession of the Blessed John, by Sister Maria Angelica, of the Most Holy Trinity, a novice of the third order of St. Francis, at Ronciglione, in the Monastery of St. Ann. She fell sick in the beginning of July, 1732, and her malady gradually taking the form of a scirrhus in the stomach, accompanied by dangerous symptoms of fatal gastritis, became so aggravated that on the 16th of October, her physician, Joseph Antony Diotallevi, regarded her case as hopeless, and directed that the last Sacraments should be administered to her without delay. The religious grieving to lose so prematurely a young person of parts so rare, excited their confidence in God, hoping to obtain her cure, though beyond the power of nature, through the merits of Blessed John Berchmans, one of whose pictures had been seen by a religious in the breviary of Sister Teresa of St. Antony. The latter, however, declared that she knew nothing of any such image, and that she never had one even casually in her breviary. Notwithstanding, taking up the book, as soon as she opened it, she saw before her in reality the picture of the Servant of God. This was regarded by the religious as a good omen, exciting them to great devotion, and to the confidence of obtaining the cure



of the sick person. However, in the afternoon of the same day, the Mother Abbess exhorted the afflicted nun, to confide in the protection of the Venerable Berchmans and to promise, if cured, to send to his tomb a silver heart. Having said these words, she retired, leaving the devout picture upon the breast of the patient. Sister Angelica took it in her hand, and gazing fixedly upon it, said that she seemed to behold in it a certain brightness which dazzled her eyes. She then subjoined: See how beautiful are the eyes of this Servant of God; see how they move; he seems to look at me. For some time she continued thus speaking to herself, as if in an ecstasy. Sister Felix Victoria, of St. Francis, who was attending the sick nun, at first did not pay much regard to these words, thinking she was delirious: but upon perceiving that she was in the full possession of her faculties, animated her to confide more and more in the venerable youth. The following morning, Sister Maria Angelica asked for the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, saying that she had been assured by the Servant of God, that after receiving the last sacraments she would be healed. She was communicated, as she desired; but as evening came on, finding that her strength was failing, she earnestly begged that she might be

anointed. As soon as the sacred unction was finished, she found herself perfectly well, as if she never had any sickness. The thought now occurred of sending to Rome the silver heart in fulfilment of the vow, but learning that no votive offerings were permitted to be suspended at the tomb, it was deemed better to abandon the idea. But on the 24th of November, the novice relapsed into the same sickness, and in four days was again brought to the verge of the grave. Such was her punishment for not having fulfilled her vow. Hence she made no delay in sending directions to Rome to have some wax candles burned on the great altar of the Church of St. Ignatius, before which lie the remains of the Servant of God. The patient recommended herself to him once more with great fervor, and after receiving the sacraments, while all feared that her death was near, she was again cured in an instant, and arose from her bed entirely healed.

Another miracle, which, if we may use the expression, comprehends several, happened at Rome, in the person of Sister Maria Crocifissa Ancaiani, a professed religious of the Order of the Visitation. I prefer rather to give here, in part, the very words of the person cured, as they were juridically set down in the Apostolic Process "In the beginning of the month of March,"

says she, "I began to be attacked by a slow fever, which constantly preyed upon me, and at the same time I suffered from a slight pain in the breast, attended with continued coughing and spitting of blood. My physicians gave me many remedies; but I received not the least relief from them. My malady grew constantly worse, and to such a degree that not only did the usual slow fever continue, but at times the pain in my breast became more violent, while my coughing and spitting of blood likewise increased; whence the same physicians judged that my malady was a consumption that was absolutely incurable. I continued in this state until the month of December, 1728, when I was taken with a most acute pain on the left side of my heart, attended with so vehement a palpitation of the same, that I can not express it. Besides, all the left part of my body, my arm, my thigh, and my leg, were so entirely paralyzed, that I could not move them. My physicians hoped to relieve me from this new affliction by bleeding me in the right arm and foot; but in vain, for in the same month of December, my malady increased with symptoms so striking that the physicians were convinced that a polypus was formed in the region of the heart. Hence they considered my case desperate, and my death near at hand. After

this, in consequence of a medicine which was given me, I was taken with strong convulsions, and my jaws closed so tightly that I was unable to open my mouth, either to eat or to speak. The sacraments having been ordered, Rev. Ferdinand Landolfi, my confessor, came, and as I could not speak, heard my confession by signs, and gave me absolution. I was unable to receive the Blessed Eucharist, and Extreme Unction was deferred on account of my having fallen into a lethargy, from which it was hoped I would be aroused, so as at least to be restored to a slight degree of consciousness.

"The Mother Superioress, Sister Angela Eleanora Lazzari together with Mother Paola Maria Scotti, then infirmarian, on the evening of the 6th of April 1729, came into the Infirmary, and approaching my bed, presented to me a picture of the Venerable John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, given to her by a chamber-maid of the Duchess Bonelli, who had the same morning received it from Brother Joseph Bruschi, of the Society of Jesus. In handing it to me, she said: 'As for you, there is no remedy for you, you cannot be cured; recommend yourself to this Servant of God, if you wish to be cured.' I was still in my lethargy, but yet I heard the voice of my Superioress. I continued in my lethargy during the night, which

I passed very badly, suffering more than usual from convulsions and fits of fainting, so that those who were around me, were of opinion that the prediction of my physician, Pesce, would be verified, viz.: that I would not survive until morning. Notwithstanding this, early the next morning, which was the 7th of April, it appeared to me that I recovered somewhat from my lethargy and had sufficient consciousness to cast a glance upon the picture of the Servant of God, John Berchmans. Seeing it, I remembered all that the Superioress had told me; hence, taking it in my right hand, which was not embarrassed, I applied the picture to my forehead, to my head and breast, recommending myself to his intercession. I applied it first to my head, making with it the sign of the cross, and immediately afterwards, I placed it on my breast, where the physicians had located the polypus, and where I suffered excessive pain; and at that very instant I felt that I was free from all my maladies, my mind was restored to its usual tranquillity, and all my senses to their normal condition. I was able to open my mouth and to speak without any difficulty. My left side, which for a long time had been paralyzed and motionless, suddenly recovered its mobility. I at once sprang from my bed and knelt down to recite three Our Fathers and Hail

Marys to the Holy Trinity, in honor of the Venerable John Berchmans." Such are her words. She then continues to relate that she herself took off the bandages which had been fastened around the diseased parts of her body, put on all her clothes, and rapidly passed through the house to the astonishment of all the religious and the physician himself, who, unsolicited, left in writing an open attestation of the miracle which had occurred.

Cured of this first sickness, Sister Maria Crocifissa continued for two years and two months in a state of perfect health, exercising the office of porteress, and employing herself in all the duties of the monastery. In October, 1731, she fell ill again; but her malady was quite different from the former. She experienced at first a severe pain in the right side of the breast, which was soon found to be the effect of a cancerous tumor, that annoyed her exceedingly. Unwilling through modesty to submit herself to the examination of a physician, she made use of a very violent remedy, prepared by an inexperienced and unprofessional man. The result was that her ailment far from being diminished, was only the more aggravated. Her right arm contracted and was benumbed, and from the irritated ulcer of the breast issued an humor, corroding, bloody, and

fetid. Constrained by obedience to place herself in the hands of physicians and surgeons, they came to the conclusion that her blood was already corrupted, and her malady by its nature was incurable. The 13th of August, the anniversary of the death of the Venerable John Berchmans, drawing near, Rev. Francis Calucci, the ordinary confessor of the monastery, exhorted the sick nun to make a devout novena to the Servant of God, and earnestly to beg him to grant a new cure. She obeyed, and on the morning of the 19th of August, after having passed a very restless night, she slept a little; as soon as she awoke, the thought of the Servant of God came to her mind and she exclaimed: My venerable patron, grant me the desired favor. With these words she arose from bed and kneeling down, recommended herself with all her heart to the blessed youth. She continued for some time thus praying with internal consolation; when upon a moment's reflection, she noticed that she was able to move freely her whole body, and was entirely without pain. Then, like one filled with astonishment, she said to herself: What is this? Am I dreaming, or have I received the desired favor?" She was radically cured: the cancerous tumor had disappeared; her ulcers were healed; all pain had ceased.

Unaided she dressed herself, and hastened to call the religious to join her in thanking her heavenly benefactor. The physicians and surgeons, who had attended her, upon being called, united in the opinion that her cure was supernatural, and an incontestible miracle effected instantaneously by the Almighty, through the intercession of his Servant, the Venerable John Berchmans.

Their opinion not only regarding the above miracle, but likewise the two preceding ones, was confirmed by the learned writings of two excellent defenders of the cause of the Servant of God, Monsignor Francis Mercurelli and Professor Hilary Alibrandi, advocates, and by three celebrated doctors in medicine and surgery, Cajetan Tancioni, Gabriel Taussig, and Joseph Maria de Rossi, who presented their sworn attestations in writing before the commission of the Sacred Congregation.

## CHAPTER X.

### *Acts of the Beatification.*

The Servant of God having died on the 13th of August, 1621, and the fame of the numerous miracles which the Almighty operated through his intercession having daily increased, it was



resolved to introduce the cause of his Beatification to the notice of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The first to take effectual steps in the matter, was his Excellency Don Philip d'Arembergh, Duke of Arscot, one of the most religious and distinguished personages then living in Flanders. A few months after the death of John, he presented a petition to Gregory XV. earnestly praying the Sovereign Pontiff that information might be taken regarding the life, virtues and miracles of the Servant of God, and at the same time, he selected as his agent and procurator at Rome, the Rev. Abbot Octavius Sacco. The memorial of the Duke was kindly received by his Holiness, and referred to Monsignor Alexander Boschi, Vicegerent of the Cardinal Vicar, who received verbal orders to draw up in due form the process of information.

There was no delay on the part of the Vicegerent in executing the command, and on the 17th of January, 1622, he commenced the Process, which begins as follows: "On the 17th of January, in the year 1622, in presence of the most illustrious and Reverend Monsignor Alexander Boschi, by the grace of God and favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Serajo, and Vicegerent of the most illustrious and Reverend Cardinal Vicar of Rome, and in presence of me, the undersigned, appeared the Rev. Abbot

Octavius Sacco, of Reggio, who in his own name and in the name of the most illustrious lord, Philip, Duke of Arscot, recalled to the memory of the aforesaid Most reverend Monsignor Vicegerent, that his Holiness Pope Gregory XV. had referred to his illustrious lordship a memorial, previously presented to his holiness on the part of the above most excellent Duke, in which it was petitioned that information might be taken on the life, death, sanctity, miracles and other good works of John Berchmans, of pious memory, who was born in Diest, in Flanders, was a religious of the Society of Jesus, and died at Rome on the 13th of August, 1621. Therefore the aforesaid Lord Abbot Octavius Sacco in the name of the parties above-mentioned, humbly supplicates your lordship, that in consequence of the aforesaid memorial, you would order the Process to be drawn up by your ordinary authority, appointing for that purpose the one who is best qualified, giving him all the necessary faculties, and performing every thing in the best possible manner," etc.

Thirty-six witnesses of the highest authority, were summoned to give their testimony, nearly all of whom had been personally acquainted with the Servant of God, and had enjoyed familiar intercourse with him at Rome and in

Flanders, viz.: three of his Confessors, Fathers Virgil Cepari, Thomas Massucci, and John Baptist Ceccotti; two of his teachers, Fathers Francis Piccolimini and Horace Grassi; and besides these, Fathers Cornelius a Lapide, James Tirino, and nearly all his classmates.

The following year, 1623, at the request of Father Antony Sucquet, Provincial of Flanders, and of Father Walter Clerici, Rector of the College of Antwerp, Monsignor John Maldero, Bishop of that city, drew up another Process of information in which were given the depositions of twenty-three other witnesses, who had known the Blessed John when a secular and a religious: and in the same Process were inserted various documents concerning certain miracles of his which had been authenticated by the municipal authorities of the district of Diest.

Those two Processes having been terminated, Father Mutius Vitelleschi, General of the Society, in the year 1625, appointed Father Virgil Cepari, postulator of the cause with ample faculties to expedite the proceedings in the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Nor could one more competent have been selected; for besides having been very much versed in this matter, as appears from the Directory which he has left in writing, he had been engaged for more than twenty-five years in promoting other

causes of canonization. But passing to a better life a few years after his appointment, and other causes of importance in the meantime arising, ours for more than a century remained abandoned and neglected. But the Venerable Servant of God took upon himself to revive the memory of his cause, by performing new and astonishing miracles at Rome and in the neighboring country. Another Process in the usual manner being formed, an abridgment of it and of the two former ones was presented to the Sacred Congregation: and in the year 1745, the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIV. approved with his signature the introduction of the cause, being moved thereunto by the merits of the Servant of God, and the fervent supplications directed to the Apostolic See by Augustus, King of Poland, John V., King of Portugal, Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary, Marianna of Austria, Regent of Belgium, the Cardinal of Alsace, Archbishop of Mechlin, the Bishops of Bruges, Ypres, Ghent and Antwerp, the Canons of the Cathedrals, the Senate and municipal councils of Belgium, and the University of Louvain.

Afterwards, the remissorial letters, as they are called, were expedited, and the Apostolic Process in Rome was drawn up, together with two others in Ronciglione and Nepi, relating to

two recent miracles, and finally one in Belgium, concerning the examination of the writings of the Servant of God. However, the lamentable political disturbances which occurred from the latter part of the past century until the return of Pius VII. to Rome, presented new obstacles to the progress of the cause. The question of his virtues having in these latter times been resumed and discussed, according to custom, in three congregations, the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI., on the 7th of June, 1843, decreed that John Berchmans had practised all virtues in a heroic degree.

While the second question, relating to his miracles, was discussed, the Cardinal Archbishop of Mechlin, with all the Bishops of Belgium, humbly petitioned the Apostolic See to expedite the cause, suggesting at the same time the spiritual advantages which would result therefrom, especially to youth. The following is their letter, translated from the original Latin.

“MOST HOLY FATHER:—The cause of the beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, John Berchmans, seeming now to be drawing to a close, I deemed it advisable to present again my supplications to the August Head of the Church, earnestly praying that the honors of the altar may be decreed by apostolic authority

to this angelic youth. Such an event would be most pleasing to all, and especially to the Church of Mechlin, in which our Venerable Berchmans, dear to God and to men, passed a great portion of his most innocent life. For he was born in Diest, and was there educated up to the fourteenth year of his age. He afterwards lived two years as a secular in Mechlin, and two more as a religious in the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. This Diocese, therefore, will with great reason rejoice to see this new honor conferred upon the Servant of God, and all the inhabitants of Belgium will exult in consequence of the tender affection which they entertain for their countryman.

“Besides, the beatification for which I petition will not only be a subject of great joy and jubilation, but an occasion of the greatest utility. For it is certain that men are ordinarily more devoted to the Saints of their country, and more easily induced to imitate their example. Now, the devotion of the Belgians is more ardent, more intense towards the Venerable Berchmans, from the fact, that though we have many saints in this country, who lived here long since, yet no Belgian has been raised to the honors of the altar in these latter times. To this we may add, that as we are now promoting, in Belgium, the Christian education of

youth, upon which the future prosperity of the Church in these parts depends, we cannot propose a more suitable example to our youth, than this most innocent Servant of God, who in so tender an age gave proof of so many and excellent virtues.

Finally, as the example of John whilst still living inflamed the beholders to perfection, so now the narration of his virtues to the young not only produces admiration, but wonderfully excites to imitation. Such are the fruits, which will be gathered in still greater abundance, Most Holy Father, when the Venerable Servant of God shall have been raised to the honors of the altar.

"I therefore pray your Holiness graciously to receive this my petition, by declaring Blessed as soon as possible, the Venerable John Berchmans, to the glory and utility of this our diocese of Mechlin, and of all Belgium; and prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, I humbly implore your apostolical benediction.

"*Mechlin, October 25, 1853.*

"ENGELBERT, *Car. Archbishop of Mechlin.*

"We, the undersigned, Bishops of Belgium, subscribe to the above petition of his Eminence, the Most Reverend Archbishop of Mechlin, and earnestly pray your Holiness to raise to the honors of the altar, as soon as possible, the

Venerable John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, a native of Belgium, and, the future patron, as we trust, of youth, especially in this country.

*"Mechlin, feast of Sts. Simon and Jude, 1853.*

*"GASPAR JOSEPH, Bishop of Tournay; NICHOLAS JOSEPH, Bishop of Namur; LOUIS JOSEPH, Bishop of Ghent; JOHN BAPTIST, Bishop of Bruges; THEODORE, Bishop of Liege."*

Having, according to custom, in three congregations maturely examined the nature and discussed the proofs of the proposed miracles, His Holiness, Pope Pius IX., graciously approved of them, by decreeing that the solemn beatification of the Servant of God, John Berchmans, could be proceeded with in perfect security.

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*We give below an Extract from the address of our Holy Father, Pius IX, on the occasion of the Beatification of the Venerable John Berchman, May 2d, 1865.*

*"It is a consolation to us to see a vast body of men devoting themselves to the instruction of youth; that youth, in whose religious training lies the future of the church—and nowhere do I find more consolation than in that venerable body—one of whose brightest ornaments we have met to honor. I bless then, in a special manner, the members of the Society of Jesus; I bless those who befriend and sustain them."*



## BRIEF OF BEATIFICATION

OF THE

VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD, JOHN BERCHMANS.

PIUS IX. POPE,

FOR A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL.

As youth is a kind of foundation for manhood, and as men do not, without great difficulty in after life, turn themselves from the path upon which they have travelled from their earliest years, therefore that there might be no excuse on the score of age or strength for swerving from the path of virtue, it has been arranged by the all-wise Providence of God, that there should flourish from time to time in the Church, some one youth eminent for sanctity, on whom that high eulogium might be passed: "Made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time:"—who abundantly compensated for the short span of his life by the greatness of his merits, and excited others to the imitation of his virtues. Among such may be fairly numbered the Venerable John Berchmans, scholastic of the Society of Jesus, who strove so vigorously to guard his baptismal innocence unsullied, and adorned his soul with such an abundance of virtues, that he seems to have shone forth as a new star to illumine the whole Church,

and more especially the Religious Order of which he was a member. He was born in the town of Diest, in Brabant, of parents not distinguished by rank or fortune; but conspicuous for religious zeal, and was by them trained to every virtue. The child, being blessed with an excellent disposition, amply repaid them for their solicitude. For to a degree quite beyond his years, he became distinguished for the gravity of his manners: never did he give any trouble, nor seek amusement in the sports common to children; but it was his delight to be constantly in the church, and to withdraw himself from intercourse with his companions, in order to betake himself to solitude, and there turn his soul to the contemplation of divine things. He had attained his eleventh year, when he was admitted for the first time to the Holy Table, and so great was the ardor of his love, when he approached to receive the most sacred Body of Christ, that the divine fire glowed on the whole countenance of the most chaste youth. Being sent to college to study the rudiments of literature, piety no less than letters became the object of his endeavors; so that as often as his fellow students cast their eyes upon him, they were excited as by some silent monitor to the love of purity, modesty, and every kind of virtue. To bind himself more closely to the service of

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God, he asked and obtained his father's consent to enrol himself among the number of the clergy. Three years afterwards, however, he leard that his father, on account of his narrow fortune, had determined to apply him to some trade, in order to have his help in obtaining the means of subsistence. News such as this was sad and afflicting for John: he began to implore his father not to withdraw him from the ecclesiastical profession which he had so eagerly embraced: he declared that he had cast aside all anxiety for temporal interests, and rested all his hopes upon Divine Providence. Having obtained his wish, he proceeded to put the finish to his literary studies, and to press on with alacrity in the path of virtue upon which he had entered; and therefore, as he saw his innocence surrounded by very many dangers, in order to place it in safety, in imitation of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose life he had long and deeply pondered, having weighed the matter well and implored the assistance of heaven, he determined to give himself to the Society of Jesus. And, indeed, the particular form of life followed by that Religious Order was above all others pleasing to this innocent youth, who was all on fire with love for his neighbor, because he felt certain that by embracing it an opportunity would be given him of passing to

the remotest parts of the earth, to pour the light of faith upon barbarous nations. Long and earnestly had John to struggle to gain the consent of his parents, who placed their hopes and those of their family on their son, and that all the more, as they saw him endowed with such great virtue.

At length, having obtained the desired leave, he was received into the Society at Mechlin, in the seventeenth year of his age. He entered it as a haven of security and rest, and gave himself forthwith to that more perfect course of life, which all can esteem and admire, but very few take up and follow. Indeed, he shone as a most perfect model of every virtue, not only for Novices, but even for the more advanced among his brethren. Beginning with humility, which is the root of all other virtues, full of a mean opinion of himself, he performed the lowest offices with alacrity. Meek and gentle towards others, but stern and severe towards himself, he used to scourge his tender body, and took food in such small quantity, as seemed scarce sufficient for sustaining and recruiting his strength. Even the slightest rules of religious discipline he observed and guarded with the greatest care; he did not allow the smallest particle of time to pass in idleness, but spent all usefully, either in reading or praying, or

conversing upon spiritual things. Nothing delighted him more than to turn his heart and soul to God as to a most loving Father. In meditating upon Him, and paying his homage to Him, so great was the ardor of the love with which he burned, that his heart was too narrow to contain its noble flame. The most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, he honored with every mark of devotion,—even from his earliest years he chose her for his heavenly Patroness, to guard for him the flower of his virginity. The two years of his novitiate being completed, he was admitted to the simple vows, which he pronounced all the more fervently, because he knew that by these vows he was to consecrate himself irrevocably to God. Then he was sent to Antwerp, and afterwards to Rome, to give himself to the study of philosophy. Nor indeed could anything have been more to his liking, than to make a stay in the City which is the chief seat and the bulwark of the Catholic Religion; where he could pay his homage to the sacred remains of the Princes of the Apostles, as also to the tombs of his Father St. Ignatius and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, in whose footsteps he was walking. And so he came to the Roman College to study philosophy, and led such a life there, that the heavenly youth Aloysius, by whose virtues that house had been ennobled,

almost seemed to have returned again to life. At length, ripe for heaven, he was attacked by a sickness, which, though trifling at first, grew worse and worse, until it caused his death on the 13th of August, in the year 1621, before he had completed his twenty-third year.

Virtue so eminent and constant as his, could not fail to draw the attention of all; so that his reputation for sanctity, which had been gaining ground during his life, increased and spread all the more after the chaste youth had exchanged this mortal life for a more blessed one. Wherefore, according to custom, an account of his life and virtues was drawn up at Antwerp and at Rome, to the end that afterwards an inquiry into the heroic degree of his virtues might be instituted by authority of the Holy See. But his cause was interrupted for a long time, until it was called to life again by the report of the miracles, by which God was said to have proclaimed the sanctity of his servant. Therefore, under Pope Gregory XVI., our Predecessor, after the arrangement of such preliminaries as were necessary in a case of this kind, in the Congregation of Cardinals charged with the care of Sacred Rites, an inquiry was set on foot into the virtues for which the Venerable John had been eminent, and these our Predecessor, the same Pope Gregory XVI., with the assent

of the same Congregation, on the 5th of June, in the year 1843, declared to have reached an heroic height. Next followed an examination of the miracles, which were said to have been wrought by the Almighty through the intercession of His Venerable Servant John Berchmans. All the circumstances being weighed and considered with the greatest care by the judges, three were found to be true and indubitable miracles; and We, after imploring the help of Heaven, at length, on the 27th of February of the present year 1865, published a decree concerning the truth of the said three miracles; and We allowed further measures to be taken, without the necessity of an examination of any other miracles.

This alone remained, to ask the Cardinals of the aforesaid Congregation, whether in their opinion it were safe to decree the honors of the Blessed to the Venerable John. Wherefore on the 8th of April of the present year, the same Congregation of Cardinals, assembled before us, after taking the votes of the Consultors, were unanimous in their opinion, that the Venerable John might be declared Blessed, with all the usual privileges, until solemn ceremony of his canonization should be performed. We then having implored assistance from the heavenly Father of Lights, published a decree on the matter on the 2nd of May, of the current year.

Now, in order that in this degenerate age we may propose to the young, surrounded as they are by so many snares laid by perfidious men, a perfect model for their imitation; and that we may find for them in Heaven a Patron, by whose aid and under whose protection they may come forth from these snares unscathed; moved, moreover, thereunto by the prayers of the whole Society of Jesus, by the advice and with the consent of the aforesaid Congregation, of our Apostolic authority, by virtue of these letters, we grant permission that the Venerable Servant of God, John Berchmans, be called hereafter by the name of Blessed, and his relics be exposed for the public veneration of the faithful, (though they are not to be carried in public processions,) and his picture be surrounded with rays of glory. Moreover, by Our authority we allow a yearly office to be said in his honor, and a Mass of the Common of Confessors to be celebrated with proper prayers approved by Us, according to the Rubrics of the Roman Missal and Breviary. The recital of this Office and the celebration of the Mass, we allow only in Rome and, its district, in the diocese of Mechlin, and in all Churches and Religious Houses of the Society of Jesus, by all the faithful who are under obligation to recite the Canonical hours, and as for the



Masses, we allow them to be celebrated by all Priests, secular as well as regular, frequenting churches in which the feast is kept. Finally we allow the solemnity of the Beatification of the Venerable John Berchmans, to be celebrated within one year from the date of this letter, in the above-mentioned churches, with the Office and Mass of a Greater Double; which indeed we direct to be done on a day to be fixed by the Ordinary, and after the same solemnity shall have been celebrated in the Vatican Basilica: notwithstanding all Constitutions and Apostolic Ordinations, and all decrees issued *de non cultu*, and all others whatsoever to the contrary. And We desire that the same credit which would be given to the signification of Our will in this letter, be also given in juridical decisions to printed copies of this, provided they be signed by the hand of the Secretary of the above-mentioned Congregation, and bear the seal of the Prefect.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, on the 9th day of the Month of May, in the year of our Lord 1865, and the 19th of Our Pontificate.

N. CARD. PARACCIANI CLARELLI.

THE END.

## The First Feast of Blessed John in Rome.

(SUNDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 1865.)

WE give here a very beautiful description of the first Feast in Rome, taken from the London Tablet, and we think it will be very interesting in connection with the life :

TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON TABLET.

DEAR SIR : As a festival, such as that we have just been keeping here in Rome, cannot come around again for many a day, I venture to believe that your readers will care for a fuller account of it than that which the limits of one of her able letters will allow your correspondent to give.

The approach of the feast of so young a Saint has naturally aroused a great deal of fervor among us. It was impossible that the consideration of the life of Blessed John should fail to make a deep impression. For it was a life only distinguished by its sweet simplicity and happy joyousness, and by the uncommon exactitude and merryheartedness with which he performed his most trivial duties, and seized the merest opportunities, and so a life unmarked by those extraordinary favors which make us ordinary men hold our breath and almost despair. From the Beatification up to Friday last there has been no cessation to the Novenas, and every morning's little Function has attracted considerable numbers. Exvotus had begun to gather about his pictures, and the visits to the altar over which it was placed had been frequent and general. Your readers will remember that, by what seemed a strange ordering of Providence, the first movement towards the Beatification of Blessed John fell through, and that his body, after laying apart for several years in expectation of the resumption of the cause, was taken off to the common burial-place, and laid there with no other mark but his name written in ink upon the whitewashed case of lead that contained what was believed to be his body. Before the ink had faded, Almighty God interposed, and some suitable miracles recalled

Blessed John to memory. It was then thought wise to open the case, and verify the body. This turned out no easy matter. - the leaden case was not the original coffin, and all that was known was that on the original coffin there had been a leaden tablet scratched with his name. This was searched for apparently in vain, and only after recovering the bones and dust and pieces of coffin was it found in the bottom of the case. Soon after this, Benedict XIV inaugurated a new movement, but the political difficulties of the last and the present century have retarded the accomplishment of the pious desire until our own times. It would seem as if Almighty God had been reserving for this obscure Flemish lad a destiny grander than that of his two nobler brothers. The marvellous charity of the sweet-souled Polish boy, and the strange union of the deepest penance with the brightest innocence that marks the young Italian Prince, will always tell upon individual rulers. But the every-day life of Blessed John, who went through the ordinary duties of his state, and improved his opportunities with so grand a fervor and heroism, as to make every one who reads his life, feel utterly ashamed of his own laxness, and laziness, and stupidity, will probably tell more widely upon the body of Christian youths so tempted to be disloyal and half asleep, when the world is first pooh-poohing the idea of being loyal to Jesus Christ, and yearns for Him, as it never dared do before.

For many weeks past preparations have been going on in the Church of the Roman College. The Church of St. Ignatius, one may as well say, is a very large church, and more than double the size of the renowned Gesu. It has a wide and lofty nave, and two good aisles, which are more properly a succession of large chapels, three on either side. These are entered from each other by arches resting on lofty pillars. Fine round arches and pillars open from the nave into the aisle chapels, though the division is really made by massive piers set with Corinthian pilasters. Only one of the chapels has marble pillars, and is coated with marble, but the pillars of this chapel of St. Joseph—the upper part of which marks the corridor wherein was the room in which St. Aloysius died—are coated with Sicilian jasper, the walls are

covered with finest marbles, and the altar columns are of verd antique. All the chapels have cupolas, but this cupola of St. Joseph's chapel is the only one that is painted. There are paintings also on the upper walls of this chapel. As compared with this, the other chapels are bare and white-washy, and the stuccoed pilasters of the nave and the stucco frieze above them, and the brick pavement, create an impression rather damaging, until the eye takes in the scale of the building, and rests on the painted roof, upon which the famous Jesuit artist Father Pozzi lavished his strange perspective in the apotheism of St. Ignatius and the earlier Saints of the Society. Passing from the nave there are the transepts which form two immense chapels, decorated alike with a wealth of fine marbles. The floors are patterns of colored marbles, the grand balustrades of the altars are of fine yellow and verd antique, the dais of the sanctuary is all of fine marble, the rather heavy-looking Corinthian pediment over the altar is of yellow and verd antique, and each rests on four serpent-twisted columns of verd antique of great size, with gilt capitals and bases, and gilt leaves wreathed around them. All around the altars and the walls are variegated marbles. Over each altar is a grand relief, the figures colossal. To the right as we face the high altar is St. Aloysius borne to heaven by angels, his figure in high relief, and the pose and expression very striking and of a masterly beauty. To the left is a famous Annunciation in half relief, designed by Father Pozzi. Under the altar to the right, in a beautiful urn of lapis lazuli, richly decorated and guarded by boy angels, lies St. Aloysius. Under the altar of the Annunciation has been placed the body of Blessed John, not as yet in an urn of lapis lazuli, but in one made like the other, and painted with that power of imitating marble which these Roman workmen possess so largely. It is also richly gilt, and its centre medallion is a silvered bust of Blessed John as he lay dead on his pillow. Here the boy angels are made only of plaster, but they are very happily cast, and while one holds up his beloved crucifix and rosary, the other holds up his equally dear book of the Constitutions. The vaults of the transept are also by Father Pozzi, and the vault of the chancel is equally remarkable. The chancel

is altogether a very fine one, and ends in an apsis. A singular contrast with all this is the dome of the church, which has been left to the last, and remains dark and unadorned, for upon it has been placed the famous observatory of the Roman College.

The aspect of the church which I have so lamely described has been for the last few years in course of transformation. Every inch of stucco and bareness in the nave and transepts and chancel has been covered with hangings or panellings of crimson velvet or silk damask, and cloth of gold and silver. The white pilasters were turned into pilasters of crimson richly banded with gilt lace, the columns were covered with velvet and patterns of gilt and silver lace disposed upon them. The round form of the arches were traced in velvet and gilt lace, and the very keystones were gilt. The inner side of the arches were richly draped with crimson silk and velvet, and white muslin festooned with gilt and silvered lace. Before the chapels of the Immaculate Heart and St. Joseph, the white muslin was supplanted by cloth of silver. The stucco figures of the frieze stood out from a crimson background, and nothing was left bare but the masonic cornice of marble with its fine moldings, which was only gracefully festooned, and the capitals of the columns, white or gilt, and their marble bases. Curtains of white and red silk draped the great entrance of the church, and immediately over the door inside was a painting representing Blessed John, as he lay exposed in the church after death. At the other end of the church the high altar was canopied in crimson velvet and cloth of silver, and the fine columns at the apex, cased in velvet, were covered with the richest devices. Under the canopy was an oval painting of Blessed John rising to Heaven—itself rather indifferent—but it had served its purpose also at St. Peter's, as the picture of the Beatification. All about the altar, and the two projecting singing galleries just outside the sanctuary, the paneling was of the richest kind and tastiest devices. Besides all this, there were the arrangements for lighting the church. The cornice of the nave and transepts was lit with tall wax candles four or five feet long, arranged in groups of threes, fives, sevens, and evelens, of gradations in height caused by the form of the

branches which held them. Every arch in the nave was traced by five glass chandeliers of large candles. The capitals of the pilasters were also traced in chandeliers. Immense chandeliers of rare large candles hung in the arches, and marked the line of the pilasters. The great arch of the chancel was completely traced out from near the ground on either side by large chandeliers. A similar arch of light traced out the commencement of the apsis. In the galleries, on the walls, in the lines of the transepts were lights dispersed in chandeliers or in branches. A very beautiful effect was produced over the canopy of the high altar by a tasteful arrangement of some very tall lights about the famous words that are painted there. "Ego vobis Romæ propiti-  
tius ero." I endeavored to count the lights and made a reckoning which I feel since was under the mark. Not including the six lights upon every altar—the double rows on some of the altars, the number of lights about the altar of Blessed John, the lights on the high altar, which at the close of Sunday's Functions were considerably increased, not including any sanctuary lights, I reckon them as 1950. Of these there were 660 in the transept, and in the chancel 782. The effects of this temple traced in light may perhaps be imagined by any of your readers who have seen a grand Roman Festa; to describe it to those who have not would utterly exceed my poor powers of description. It was the grandest thing I ever saw,—it was at once complete and unique, and had none of that distance and vastness which make the interior lighting of St. Peter's seem quite beyond one's grasp to realize. The windows were all curtained, so as to make the effect more perceptible.

All this preparation came to an end on Thursday, and Thursday evening was fixed for the translation of the body, which had been taken some weeks ago from the common sepulchre, and carried in state to the upper chapel. From this it had been borne on Thursday to the Aula Maxima, the upper corridor of the Quadrangle, and there it lay in state till six o'clock. The corridors of the Quadrangle, along which the procession was to pass, had been prepared with much taste. The inner walls were hung with silk and satin damask, and Prince Barberini had lent his

famous old scripture tapestries, which went round the whole line of windows. The arches were hung with white and red silk curtains, and the upper was filled in with red and white and yellow and white, arranged in fluted rays with capital effect. In the corridor facing the great entrance were suspended large oval portraits of the five stars of the Roman College, each filling an arch. In the centre was placed Blessed John, having on his right St. Aloysius and Blessed Leonard of Porte Maurice, and on his left St. Camillus of Lellis and Blessed John Baptist de Rossi. Under the portrait of B. John was this inscription :

“ Joanni Berchmans  
Quinto ex condiscipulis nostris  
Ad cœlitum honores evecto  
Atenim festo cultu exornavimus.”

There were flowers in plenty dispersed about the picture ; between the arches were stands of flowers, and in the piers were placed elegant couplets, happily expressing his various virtues, while the pavement was a mass of bay leaves and box.

At six o'clock the procession began to leave the Maxima, chanting the Te Deum, the pauses between the verses being filled up by the powerful band of the gendarmerie. It passed along the upper corridor and down the east staircase, and filed along three of the lower corridors and the Porteria into the church, where it passed by the south aisle up the nave towards the High Altar. The procession was very long. It was headed by the cross-bearer of the sodality of the Prima Primaria and his attendants, the cross-bearer being the son of a Prince of one of the oldest Roman families. Then came the externs of the schools with their professors—so far as philosophy. The members of the colleges and seminaries came next in their various uniforms. Behind the German College came the cross-bearer of the church and the Jesuit novices, scholastics and professors, all in cottas, followed by the Bishop, the Archbishop of Selucia in partibus, with his ministers. Then came the choir of the Roman College, and boys strewing flowers. The chest which contained the body was borne by five scholastics in Dalmatics, who bore

on their shoulders the velvet-colored poles of the bier, rich with crimson and gold, and richly canopied, which supported the chest. On the chest itself was a white silk pall and a large wreath of rare flowers, festoons of rare flowers decorating also the bier. The Jesuit Fathers from the other houses followed the bier, and various other persons admitted to the procession, which was closed in by the band of gendarmerie. Unhappily, one well-known face was missing—the Father General being too unwell to come into Rome from the country where he had been recruiting, though he managed to return on the following day. This procession had a striking character of its own, for in it there were many men walking humbly who have earned a reputation wide as civilization. Every one carried a long taper, and by the time the body entered and the procession began to move up the nave, the effect in the church was very remarkable. The throng in the corridors had been notable, but there no women were allowed. But in the church had gathered a vast crowd, the kneeling sea of heads in the dim nave and aisles contrasting with the stage of lights in the transepts about the High Altar—the whole illumination coming from the tapers of the procession, as only a few lights burned on the High Altar and the Altar of the Annunciation. Through that crowd the bier was borne up to the High Altar and set down before it, while the *Iste Confessor* was sung and the Collect said. It was then borne to its resting-place, and deposited on the New Altar, and later placed privately in the urn.

Saturday.—This second day of the Triduo was marked by many more communions and by a vaster crowd of worshippers. A peculiarity of to-day was a Greek low mass at the High Altar, at which the students of the Greek College made their communion. It was at the Greek College that B. John made the Disputation which tried his strength too much. The High Mass of to-day was pontificated by an Augustinian Bishop, Monsignor Michælielief, and was remarkable for its exceeding beauty. Thundering orchestras are very rare in Rome, and the double choir of the Roman College needed no orchestra. In the pauses of the voices, instruments were to-day introduced with splendid



effect. The panegyric was preached by Father Gallerani, a young Ferrarese Jesuit, who has a great reputation in Rome. Father Gallerani is a spare man, of ascetic aspect, and his voice is not powerful, though it seems to acquire strength. He can always fill the Gesu—he was less distinctly heard in all parts of St. Ignatius by the vast crowd that had gathered to listen to him. He preaches simply, but his ideas are beautiful; he uses action less than most Italian preachers, but what he does use is never florid or studied. His secret lies in this: his words literally burn by their earnestness. There is no doubt of his meaning fully every syllable he utters. To-day he preached from the words, “*Incipe, et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.*” The “*monte*” was the Vatican, and the words were the Pope’s words to the Christian youth of the world. He powerfully contrasted the manners of B. John with the manners current among the youth of our days—the true philosophy of his self-education with the false philosophy of theirs. He preached for quite an hour, but no one seemed weary of listening. At the Vespers, the venerable Capuchin Bishop of Muro, in Naples, pontificated. The voices of the boys seemed to have reached perfection, and there were some fine solos by members of the Papal Chapel. The crowd beggars all description.

Sunday.—The day of the feast was equal to the most sanguine desire. The doors of the church were opened at half-past 5 A.M. A large crowd was waiting outside as early as five. By seven o’clock the church was so full that it was difficult to make one’s way. Communion was incessant, and priests were stationed to give communion out of mass to prevent any delay in the masses. Several Cardinals said mass, and members of schools and religious ladies visited the shrine. There were offerings of choice flowers, mothers brought their children to lay them before the altar, or to have them, if sick, touched by a relic. At eight o’clock the students of the college entered in solemn procession, singing the Psalms of our Lady. All the colleges and seminaries that attend the Gregorian University and are still in Rome, were present. Our own college was in the country. There were

borne in the procession wreaths and baskets of magnificent flowers, and letters to B. John, which were deposited at his altar. At the high altar Cardinal Sacconi said mass for the students, and gave communion, with the assistance of a priest, to the vast numbers. Every one received a compendium of the Saint's life, and the mass which was raised by mottets ended with a grand *Te Deum*. At half-past ten the High Mass was pontificated by Monsignor Castellacci, Archbishop of Petra, in partibus, and Vicegerent of Rome. The crowds that were present during the morning were beyond all comprehension, for the feast had also attracted whole multitudes of people from the country. The amount of demands for pictures, big and little, and the lives of the Saints and compendia of lives, during the three days reached a height which seemed to threaten beggary to the College. The church was not shut till long past one, and at three there were numbers waiting in the burning August sun at the different doors of the church and college. The visits to the rooms in the afternoon can only be described as the passing and repassing of continuous streams. The only visitors were of course males, but they were persons of almost every grade of life. The workhouse boys were prominent amongst the number. The room of St. Aloysius and the chapel wherein St. Stanislaus was received into the Society were equally public. The sight in the church beggared all experience of Roman crowds. Happily a Roman crowd is one of the gentlest and most good-tempered in the world, or in such a scene as that of yesterday afternoon in the Church of St. Ignatius, there would have been some serious difficulties. Everybody had his or her prayer to say before the shrine, that was glittering with light and set with the rarest flowers. The panegyric was not long but very eloquent, and preached by Monsignor Anivetti, Domestic Prelate of the Pope. The Vespers were pontificated by Monsignor Clemente, Bishop of Damascus. Their elaborate singing was so curtailed that they were finished by the *Ave Maria*. They did not lose by the curtailment. There were fewer solos, but the voices of the boys were at their best, and the harmonies beyond description beautiful. More lights were placed about the High Altar, and the appearance of the

church at the close of Vespers was quite indescribable. The people still crowded the church, not dwindling off as they generally do at the close of Vespers, and Benedictus followed. When the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, the Te Deum began. As the choir and the congregation sang alternate verses, the effect was extremely grand. Then followed a fine Tantum Ergo by the choir, and the Bishop gave Benediction. The corridors of the Quadrangle were once more swarming with men and boys, and the rest of the congregation stayed to look at the façade of the church traced out cleverly in light. A military band was stationed there, and the Piazza was more or less full for a long time. The other parts of the College were also illuminated and the neighboring houses contributed their quota of lights.

In this way came to a close those three happy days, and the first Feast of Blessed John Berchmans will be a life-long memory to the least, as well as the greatest who took part in it. The effect that may come of it who shall attempt to measure? God's ways are not our ways. But surely not for nothing will He have allowed this young life to come so vividly before the youth of Rome in these evil days. There must be something great to come out of a life that has attained honor greater than ever king or emperor even, amongst his fellow men, through the turning his back entirely upon all that the world holds up for love and reverence.

E. H. MARTIN.

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We also annex a letter from Belgium, giving an account of the celebration of the first feast in his native city of Diest:

Ghent, August 18th, 1865.

All here are occupied with the solemnities in honor of the Blessed Berchmans, whose beatification, as you are aware, took place at Rome the 28th of May last, our Very Reverend Provincial and several other Belgian Fathers being present. The ceremonies are said to have been of the most magnificent character, and even to have surpassed the usual celebrations of the kind, which are always carried out at Rome with such unequalled

splendor. Our Cardinal Archbishop of Malines was present by invitation from the Sovereign Pontiff, and brought with him on his return, some valuable relics, a bone from the saint's forearm, which he has had deposited in his metropolitan cathedral, on a superb altar lately erected for the purpose, and which he has consecrated in honor of his blessed Diocesan. The solemnities on this occasion lasted three days, consisting of imposing processions, sermons, &c., with a spontaneous illumination of the whole city. His eminence had petitioned that all the clergy of his archdiocese should be favored with the power of celebrating every year, the Feast of the Beatified, which has been fixed on the 13th of August, the day of his death. Accordingly, the festival was celebrated on Sunday, 13th inst., in all the churches, and the blessed John Berchmans was publicly invoked for all the faithful; Diest, his native city, endeavoring, as was natural, to carry away the palm. "It is now fifteen days," writes a friend from Dieste, "since our blessed compatriot received the homages of the city of Malines, where he finished his course of humanities, and commenced his religious life in the novitiate of the Society of Jesus." It was fitting that his Feast should be celebrated the first time with the greatest solemnity in the city which gave him birth. For a long time the inhabitants of Dieste had been preparing to pay to their sainted fellow-citizen this debt of affection and respect, and we are most happy to add that their zeal and piety rendered the event every way worthy their elaborate preparation.

On the Saturday before the solemnity, Diest presented a most animated sight. The streets were planted with evergreens. The fronts of the houses were hung with garlands and inscriptions, while the parochial church of St. Sulpice presented in the words of our correspondent, "*un coup d'œil ravissant*." From all parts of the vaulted roof descended festoons and banners, with statues of the various saints of the Society of Jesus, the arms of Pius IX, &c. Finally, in the choir there appeared over the altar, the picture of Berchmans, with hands clasped, the eyes raised to heaven, and borne on a cloud, as if ascending to take possession of eternal glory. On Sunday

morning His Eminence the Cardinal celebrated Mass at six o'clock, and gave the Holy Communion; at ten o'clock the grand High Mass was sung by Mgr. Laniers, Vicar-General, in full pontificals, and with all the ceremonial used at Rome on occasions of like solemnity. An immense but respectful throng filled the church, while strangers from all parts of the city were continually passing in and out.

At three o'clock the procession began to form. The garrison of the city, which the military authorities had placed at the disposal of the clergy, maintained order, and gave to the ceremony a character still more imposing.

It was outside the city, near a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, that young Berchmans used to make frequent visits, and here was deposited the case containing his relics. The clergy intoned the Litany of the saints; at the chanting of the *Sancta Maria ora pro nobis*, the bells sounded and the procession moved forward.

At the head walked the members of the Sodalties of the Holy Virgin, who had come from Louvain to venerate the new patron of youth. They were followed by the various confraternities and societies of Dieste and the surrounding country, each preceded by its banners, and carrying tapers, statues, devices, and flags. Between these two files of pilgrims walked the children of the most noble families of the city; some carried lilies, some curious and emblematic devices, and others vessels of perfumes or garlands of flowers. Several assumed characters of the principal personages referred to in the ceremonies. Berchmans was represented in a special manner between St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus Kostka. After the cross defiled slowly more than a hundred ecclesiastics, each bearing in his hand a lighted taper. Lastly, came the reliquary, borne by the ecclesiastics of Dieste, and accompanied by eight priests in copes. Among them were the Deans of Alentours and their Provincial; while around it, as a guard of honor, were the Canons of the Chapter of Malines, Priests of the diocese and of the different Religious Orders; after these advanced the Cardinal, followed by his Vicars-general, and a platoon of infantry

closed the line, though thousands of the faithful followed, praying and invoking in a loud voice the Beatified.

As soon as they had entered the church the Cardinal blessed them three times with the relics of their sanctified fellow-citizen. An hour after the Cardinal intoned the hymn of the Beatified, and the panegyric was pronounced by our Father Schoopts in the presence of an immense audience. The fête was continued the entire week with solemn offices, sermons, &c., &c. The house where the Saint was born is to be converted into a chapel in his honor.

And now, my dear friend, what salutary thoughts should present themselves to our minds! Behold how the Lord glorifies His faithful servants, and causes them to be honored by men. They left all things, to unite themselves with and follow Him in poverty, humility, obedience, suffering, and the derision of the world, and for this He returns them a hundred fold in glory, honor, riches and jubilation without end. Oh, pray, then, for me, that I may imitate, at least in a distant manner, my blessed Brother Berchemans, and that like him I may be faithful in little things! And you, dear reader, take him for your model, patron, and guide towards perfection.

Enclosed I send you a photograph of the Beatified and litanies. Please have them translated into English, in order to propagate devotion as much as possible towards this young and so amiable saint. You will soon begin to see its wonderful effects. And greatest joy of all, I send herewith two little relics of the Saint,—pieces of his soutan. You can guarantee them.

Your brother and very dear friend in J. C.,

P. J. WALLE, S. J.

To ———, Philadelphia, Pa.











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THE LIFE OF ST. JOHN  
BERCHMANS OF THE  
SOCIETY OF JESUS

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